Islamic Perspectives on God and (Other) Monotheism(s)

Edited by

Wahid M. Amin
Aaron W. Hughes
Sajjad H. Rizvi

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Mullā Ṣadrā and His Commentators on Ibn Kammūnā's Argument Against Divine Unity

Wahid M. Amin

This paper examines the proofs of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) in the writings of Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, d. 428/1037) and their reception in post-Avicennian Islamic philosophy. While Avicenna's demonstration of divine unity became widely accepted among later Muslim thinkers, it was not without its critics. One of the most significant challenges to Avicenna's argument came from the 13th-century Jewish philosopher Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284), who questioned whether the necessity of existence (*wujūb al-wujūd*) logically entails God's uniqueness. His counterargument, which later scholars referred to as the '*shubha* of Ibn Kammūna,' challenged a fundamental assumption in Avicenna's proof by raising the possibility of multiple Necessary Beings. This critique generated extensive debate among later Islamic philosophers, particularly within the Ṣadrian tradition.

This paper seeks to address the following key question: Does Ibn Kammūna's critique successfully undermine Avicenna's proof of divine unity, particularly when analysed through the lens of Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysical system? To answer this, the paper first examines Avicenna's proofs of divine unity, paying particular attention to his reliance on the doctrines of divine simplicity and divine aseity. It then analyses Ibn Kammūna's objection, explaining the logical structure of his critique and its implications. Finally, the paper explores the responses of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) and his commentators, demonstrating how their commitment to the primacy and modulation of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd* and *tashkīk al-wujūd*, respectively) provides a more robust framework for defending divine unity against Ibn Kammūna's critique. By situating Ibn Kammūna's argument within the broader trajectory of Islamic metaphysics, this study aims to show that his objection does not hold in the Ṣadrian framework.

1. Avicenna's Proof(s) of Divine Unity

Avicenna's attempts to demonstrate the unity of the Necessary Being can be categorised into two distinct yet closely related approaches.[1] In certain arguments, he presupposes

1 There are surprisingly few studies in the English language devoted to Avicenna's doctrine of divine unity and his ideas about henology in his metaphysics more generally. Two noteworthy examples are Mohammed Saleh Zarepour's *Necessary Existence and Monotheism: An Avicennian Account of the Islamic Conception of Divine Unity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) which contains a brief account of Avicenna's docrine of divine unity, and Damien Janos' *Oneness, Essence, and Self-Identity: A New Interpretation of Avicenna's Henology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024) which provides a thorough analysis

the doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS) to show that divine simplicity is incompatible with the assertion that there are multiple divine entities each having the necessity of existence due to themselves. Such an approach typically takes the form of a hypothetical syllogism: If there are two Necessary Beings then they are both necessarily composed in essence. But no Necessary Being is composed in essence (DDS). Therefore, there is only one Necessary Being. What is evident in arguments of this kind is that the simplicity of the Necessary Being is taken as a premise in the argument for divine unity itself.[2] A proof that every Necessary Being must be a simple being is therefore also counted as a proof of Its uniqueness, and likewise a demonstration to the effect that there is at least one Necessary Being that is simple must also be considered a proof that It is the only possible Necessary Being.[3] Avicenna tried to demonstrate this on several occasions.[4]

However, in other arguments, Avicenna leaves out the assumption that every Necessary Being must be a simple entity and instead highlights the significance of divine aseity as the central idea with which to comprehend the nature of the Necessary Being. Such an approach emphasises the principle of sufficient reason above any other consideration. Indeed, as we shall note shortly, DDS is itself a consequence of the doctrine of divine aseity. This doctrine posits that the divine being is a self-sufficient and independent entity that lacks any requirement beyond itself for its existence or its attributes, one of which is its unity. By shifting the focus to divine aseity, Avicenna is making a conscious attempt in my view to demonstrate the external unity (*wāḥidiyya*) of the Necessary Being without assuming DDS (*aḥadiyya*), which it could be argued is a superior method of proving God's uniqueness given that it avoids taking for granted something that is in need of direct proof itself.[5] Avicenna shows that it is therefore possible to demonstrate the Necessary

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of Avicenna's henology. On the conception of divine unity in al-Fārābī, see Olga L. Lizzini, 'L'unité et l'unicité de Dieu: Le double sens de l'être chez al-Fārābī et Avicenne', *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 149, no. 1 (2024): 17–31. See also Aladdin M. Yaqub, 'Al-Ġhazālī's Philosophers on the Divine Unity,' *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 20 (2010): 281–306.

2 As noted by Mayer, composition-based arguments for the uniqueness of the Necessary Being stretch back *via* al-Kindī to Plotinus's *Enneads*. For Plotinus, any kind of composition in the essence of a being—even if such compositions are purely analytical and mental in nature—precludes it being one in the absolute sense. Rather, such beings are 'one-many' and thus require a higher principle for their existence. See Toby Mayer, 'Faḫr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī's Critique of Avicenna's Argument for the Unity of God in the *Išārāt*, and Naṣīr ad-Dīn Ṭūsī's Defence,' in *Before and Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group*, ed. David C. Reisman (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 199–218. See also Mohammad Saleh Zarepour, *Necessary Existence and Monotheism*, 3.

3 In this paper I do not consider Avicenna's arguments for the existence of the Necessary Being. Needless to say, scholarship on this aspect of Avicenna's metaphysics is considerably vast.

4 For example, see Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, ed. Sayyid Ḥusayn Mūsawiyān (Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Pazhūhashī Ḥikmat u Falsafah-i Īrān, 1401/[2022–2023]), 183–84.

5 It is this feature of Avicenna's proof of divine unity that makes it markedly different from the one offered by his predecessor Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. On the Farābian proof, see al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State* (*Kitāb Ārā ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*), edited and translated by Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 60–61: 'The First Existent is different in its substance from everything else, and it is impossible for anything else to have the existence it has. For between the First and whatever were to have the same existence as the

Being's uniqueness with or without DDS. These approaches are distinct: the first kind of argument relies on the idea that a multitude of Necessary Beings undermines their simplicity, a problem in its own right—whereas the second shows that a multiplicity of divine beings undermines their self-sufficiency. This is quite an audacious move by Avicenna and one that deliberately emphasises the role of modality in his metaphysics, and for this reason represents a significant departure in the proofs offered by earlier *falāsifa* for the Necessary Being's uniqueness because whereas the simplicity of the Necessary Being requires proof, Its self-sufficiency does not. A Necessary Being just is a self-sufficient being. Whilst it can therefore be doubted whether or not the Necessary Being is a simple being, its being necessary is impervious to doubt; Its existing necessarily is precisely what it is; and doubting this would be as illogical as doubting whether a square is a square. Moreover, it is because of divine aseity that divine simplicity itself becomes an inevitable requirement. Because a Necessary Being cannot depend on anything other than itself for Its subsistence, It cannot *ipso facto* have any proper parts which combine to make It necessarily existent.[6] Therefore, according to Avicenna, divine aseity entails divine simplicity, and it seems that necessity for him—that is, being self-sufficient—is what grounds the metaphysical notion of simplicity and not the other way round.

A key question that arises in connection with these claims is whether or not there is a logical or necessary relation between the internal unity (or simplicity) of the Necessary Being on the one hand and Its external unity (or unicity) on the other. Does committing to the doctrine of divine simplicity also commit one to believing that there is only one divine being? Avicenna believes it does. Ibn Kammūna, a thirteenth-century Jewish philosopher, believed that it doesn't. Why can't there be two Necessary Beings that are both simple and uncaused? To appreciate what is at stake in these arguments, this paper will begin with an analysis and explication of Avicenna's proofs of divine unity before turning to the debates that ensued after him in the writings of his commentators.

First, there could be no difference and no distinction at all. Thus there would not be two things but one essence only, because, if there were a difference between the two, that in which they differed would not be the same as that which they shared, and thus that point of difference between the two would be a part of that which sustains the existence of both, and that which they have in common the other part. Thus each of them would be divisible in thought, and each of the two parts of the First would be a cause for the subsistence of its essence; and it would not be the First but there would be another existent prior to it and a cause for its existence—and that is impossible.' (Translation by Walzer) As for the Qur'anic description of God as *aḥad* referring to the Necessary Being's simplicity in Avicenna's thought, see Daniel De Smet and Meryem Sebti, 'Avicenna's Philosophical Approach to the Qur'an in the Light of His *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*,' *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 11, no. 2 (2009), 137–38.

6 Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishghāh-i Ṭihrān, 1985), 551–53; idem, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. Mujtabā al-Zāriʿī (Qom: Būstān-i Kitāb, 1423/[2002–2003]), 272.

1.1 Argument(s) from Aseity

An argument from aseity is one that aspires to demonstrate God's uniqueness by resorting to nothing other than God's self-sufficiency. It argues that a belief in the proposition 'God is self-sufficient' warrants the belief that 'God is one' (or, equivalently, 'That there is only one God'). In the context of Avicenna's metaphysics in which modality plays a crucial role, the argument seeks to arrive at the following conclusion: 'If the Necessary Being is self-sufficient, then there is only one Necessary Being.' The argument therefore begins with a claim about divine aseity and attempts to derive a conclusion that asserts divine unity. Avicenna provides a variety of arguments to demonstrate the truth of this conditional statement by considering the implications of denying the consequent. By assuming—for the sake of argument—that there are two or more Necessary Beings, Avicenna shows that there is a logical entailment between the affirmation of divine plurality, on the one hand, and the negation of divine self-sufficiency, on the other. If it can be shown that the existence of more than one Necessary Being undermines each individual Necessary Being's self-sufficiency, then that is a sufficient proof that there cannot be more than one Necessary Being. This is because a Necessary Being that depends on something other than Itself for Its existence (or one of Its perfections) cannot be *necessarily* what It is *due to Itself*. Avicenna utilises arguments of this kind to demonstrate that there cannot be a plurality of Necessary Beings: either there are no Necessary Beings at all or there is just one. Crucially, it is his conception of God as a being that is necessarily existent due to itself that determines this impossibility, since according to Avicenna the notion of being self-sufficient is a concept interwoven in the concept of 'existing necessarily' (*wājib al-wujūd*).[7] It is here that we can ask the question pertinent to this paper: How does Avicenna demonstrate a violation of the doctrine of divine self-sufficiency in that hypothetical scenario in which there are multiple Necessary Beings? To answer this, let us review some of Avicenna's arguments for divine unity through the principle of divine self-sufficiency.

7 Avicenna usually expresses the concept of divine self-sufficiency with the expression 'necessary of existence in all respects' (*wājib al-wujūd min jamīʿ al-wujūh* or *jamīʿ al-jihāt*). For example, see Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ, al-Ilahiyyāt*, eds. G. C. Anawati, S. Zayed, M. Musa and S. Dunya (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿĀmma Li-Shuʾūn al-Maṭābiʿ al-Amīriyya, 1960), I.6, p. 37; English translation by Michael E. Marmura, *The Metaphysics of the Healing* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 30. A Necessary Being is not just necessary in one or some respects only; It is necessary in all respects (I will refer to this as the principle of absolute necessity). If this were not the case, then there would be at least one respect in which It is not necessary, which implies that there is an aspect or respect within the divine being in which it is contingent. As such, the presence of just a single aspect or respect in which something is contingent, whether this aspect is in relation to its existence or one of its other perfections, is sufficient to make it a contingent being and not a Necessary Being. To be necessary in all respects and perspectives, therefore, means that the Necessary Being is not just necessarily existent (*wājib al-wujūd*), but also necessarily knowing, necessarily powerful, necessarily living etc. If, for example, the Necessary Being's knowledge were not necessary for It, then Its being a knower would be contingent on something other than It's own essence. This renders God's knowledge contingent, and hence God is imperfect. On the proof of the principle of absolute necessity, see Avicenna, *al-Najāt*, 553.

Avicenna begins arguments in this vein by assuming that there are two (or more) Necessary Beings each defined as having the necessity of existence due to themselves (*wujūb al-wujūd bi-l-dhāt*). The qualifier 'due to themselves' ensures that such beings are self-sufficient and independent of any causes whatsoever. If we imagine there are two Necessary Beings, then each of these must have something by virtue of which they are different from the other. In other words, there has to be something that differentiates them from every other existence including other Necessary Beings. Otherwise, there is no difference between them, and their being indiscernible implies that they are identical. Customarily, this is known as the principle of individuation,[8] and let us therefore call that thing by virtue of which they are different the 'individuation' or 'individuating principle'. In that scenario, then, in which there are two Necessary Beings, each possesses an individuation that is lacking in the other. Depending on whether or not we assume DDS, these individuating factors will be either essential or non-essential properties of each Necessary Being. For example, when considering the hypothetical scenario in which there are two Necessary Beings at *Ilāhiyyāt* I.7 of the *Shifā'*, Avicenna identifies each Necessary Being's individation as an accident (sing. *ʿaraḍ* and *lāḥiq*).[9] Although he does not explain in explicit terms why each Necessary Being's individuation cannot be something intrinsic or essential to them, this is presumably because he has already explained in the preceding sections that whatever has the necessity of existence due to itself cannot have a *māhiyya*, a quiddity distinct from its *inniyya*, its individual existence. Hence, given the surrounding context, it is reasonable to assume that whatever distinguishes and individuates each Necessary Being it must be something extraneous to their individual natures as beings that are comprised of existence (*inniyya*) only. In doing so, the argument appears to factor DDS into consideration. But it could be argued that the individual existences of each Necessary Being suffices as a principle of their individuation(s) and hence there is no further need beyond the very existence that each Necessary Being possesses to account for their individuations. Avicenna appears to have this objection in mind when he explains that each Necessary Being's individuation cannot simply be due to the fact that each Necessary Being has necessary existence as this would imply that the individuation in question is a concomitant of necessary existence, which entails that each Necessary Being has the *same* individuation.[10] But if each

8 Everything that exists must have an individuation that particularises its existence. This is a principle of metaphysics in Islamic philosophy referred to by the dictum '*al-shay' mā lam yatashakhkhaṣ lam yūjad*'. See Ghulām-Ḥusayn Ibrāhīmī Dīnānī, *Qawāʿid-i kullī-yi falsafī dar falsafah-i Islāmī* (Tehran: Pazhūhashgāh-i ʿUlūm-i Insānī u Muṭālaʿāt-i Farhanghī, 1389Sh/2011), 1:240–46. For a more general discussion of the problem, see Fedor Benevich, 'Individuation and identity in Islamic philosophy after Avicenna: Bahmanyār and Suhrawardī', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28, no. 1 (2020): 4–28.

9 Avicenna, *al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I.7, pp. 43–4 (=Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 35). Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Avicenna are mine.

10 Avicenna, *al-Shifā*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I.7, p. 44. It is crucial to note that there is no real—i.e. ontological—difference between the existence of the Necessary Being and Its necessity. This was a bone of major contention

Necessary Being is the same *vis-à-vis* its essence (viz. the necessity of existence) and the concomitant by virtue of which they are each individuated, then every Necessary Being is just the same in reality as every other and thus indiscernible in actuality. What one Necessary Being has is also possessed by every other Necessary Being. In that case, there would be only one Necessary Being and not many. For this reason, the necessity of existence that two Necessary Beings have becomes a point of their convergence, not a point of divergence, which means that their individual existences alone are not sufficient to differentiate them from each other, and hence the mere fact that they are necesssarily existent cannot be regarded as the principle of their individuation. An explanation for why they are different is still required, therefore, and the metaphysics here—assuming that it takes DDS into consideration—requires that the difference betweem them lies outside of their individual essences, hence the reason why the difference (or individuation) is identified as an accident.

What Avicenna seems to want to emphasise therefore is that the individuations belonging to each Necessary Being cannot be due to their being necessary existents only, but neither can they be a concomitant of this shared meaning since that does not differentiate them either. In other words, that by which two Necessary Beings are the same (i.e. necessary existence) cannot itself be the reason why they are different, and this according to Avicenna appears to be an intuitive claim. Rather, the individuation that accounts for each Necessary Being's specific existence must lie entirely beyond the essence of each

among Avicenna's commentators. In some of his works, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī devoted considerable time and energy to the question of how necessity and existence are related to each other. But he assumes, in these particular works at least, that the two are really distinct. Although the question was never dealt with by Avicenna in the same detail as subsequent thinkers, he nevertheless appears to indicate that by the necessity of existence (*wujūb al-wujūd*) he means not that there is a separate attribute or property that is added to the essence or existence of a Necessary Being but rather just that It has the strongest possible mode of existence. The phrase he uses is *ta'akkud al-wujūd*. This means that whatever has the necessity of existence due to itself has existence necessarily, not that it has necessity in addition to its existence. Therefore, a Necessary Being is one the existence of which is so strong that existence is fixed (*ta'akkud*) for it—both conceptually and in existence. A Necessary Being can never not have existence, therefore, unlike a contingent being whose existence is not fixed for it but could potentially be removed from it. In the Metaphysics of *Kitāb al-Hidāya*, the expression used by Avicenna is *tawkīd al-wujūd*. See Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Hidāya*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbdu (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira al-Ḥadītha, 1974), 261 (para 157). Note, that Avicenna makes it clear that the necessity of existence and existence are not two things; rather, the former expresses a qualification of the latter as the strongest and most assured form of existence: '*idh wujūb al-wujūd tawkīd al-wujūd lā amr yaʿriḍ lahu l-wujūd bi-sabab wa-huwa ghayruh*'. Cf. Ibn Kammūna, *al-Kāshif* (*al-Jadīd*) *fī l-ḥikma*, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Iṣfahānī (Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Pazhūhashī Ḥikmat u Falsafah-i Īrān, 1387Sh/[2008]), 428 (*wa-wujūb al-wujūd lā yaqtaḍī tarakkubuhu min wujūdin wa-wujūbin fa-inna l-wujūb huwa ta'akkud al-wujūd wa-kamāliyyatuhu wa-l-kamāliyya laysat bi-zā'idatin ʿalā l-shay' fī l-aʿyān*). For our discussion later in this paper it is important to note Ibn Kammūna's association of the notion of necessity (*wujūb*) with perfection (*kamāl*), which he again highlights in his commentary on Suhrawardī's *al-Tawīḥāt*; see Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt al-lawḥiyya wa-l-ʿarshiyya*, ed. Najafqulī Ḥabībī (Tehran: Mīrāṡ-i Maktūb, 1387Sh/[2008]), 3:175 (*wa-hāhunā laṭīfa wa-hiya annaka idhā qulta ‹‹wājib al-wujūd›› yanbaghī an lā yufham min ‹‹al-wujūd›› maʿnan wa-min ‹‹al-wujūb›› [maʿnan] ākhar fa-yalzam al-tarkīb wa-l-munāqaḍa li-mā qurrira min wujūb ʿadam al-takaththur bal wujūbuhu huwa kamāliyyatu wujūdihi wa-huwa basīṭ fa-lā ism lahu*).

Necessary Being and beyond the concommitant properties that ensue from the necessity of existence. But this leads to an infelicitous consequence. If the individuation that each Necessary Being possesses is an accident, then each Necessary Being would be *caused*. Since every Necessary Being in this scenario cannot exist without first being something individuated, it follows by the transitivity of causation that whatever causes the individuation of each Necessary Being also causes each of their individual existences.[11] This implies that the existence of each Necessary Being is an effect of something other than itself, and this in turn implies that every Necessary Being is dependent on something other than itself for Its existence.[12] However, given that anything that depends on something other than itself for its existence is not self-sufficient, it follows that each of the beings that was initially hypothesised as a Necessary Being is in actual fact just a contingent being. It is clear, then, that both DDS and the doctrine of divine self-sufficiency (a specific instance of the principle of sufficient reason) are factored into Avicenna's reasoning for divine unity. What this argument appears to demonstrate is that the presence of a multitude of Necessary Beings undermines the aseity of each Necessary Being such that none of the entities in question suffices as an independent cause or explanation of its own existence, which is precisely what they must be if they are to be considered Necessary Beings.[13]

Avicenna considers a slightly modified approach for demonstrating the external unity of the Necessary Being from aseity in his discussion immediately following the argument just explained. In this argument (*Ilāhiyyāt* I.7.5–13) he begins by supposing that the necessity of existence belonging individually to each Necessary Being is either a genus or a species. Considered in this way, the necessity of existence is treated as an essential predicate of each Necessary Being. Let us assume, then, that the necessity of existence is a universal predicable of a multitude of Necessary Beings. Now, on the one hand, if 'being necessary' is a genus then its division and distribution among multiple Necessary Beings requires a corresponding number of specific differences, since without this added consideration all of the Necessary Beings in question would be indiscernible. On the other hand, if 'being necessary' is a species then its division among a multitude of Necessary Beings requires accidents of a sufficiently great number to differentiate each instance of that species from other instances of the same. Notice that Avicenna abandons the doctrine of divine simplicity here. The argument he is developing does not

11 By the transitivity of causation I mean the following: if it is true that A causes B and B causes C, then A causes C is also true. In the context of our discussion this means that if something (*w*) causes the individuation (*a*) of a certain Necessary Being, and if that individuation is necessary for the individual existence of that Necessary Being, then it follows by the transitivity of causation that *w* is also a cause that Necessary Being's individual existence.

12 Avicenna rejects the irreflexivity of causation; i.e., nothing can be the cause of its own existence. See Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, IV.17, p. 270.

13 The Qur'an emphasises the sheer independence of God in numerous verses, but it is perhaps most eloquently expressed in the verse 'It is you who stand in need of God—God needs nothing and is worthy of all praise' (Q. 35:15).

assume the internal unity of the Necessary Being but instead begins with the seemingly unproblematic assumption that each Necessary Being is a composite.[14] The reason for this, I argue, is because he wishes to focus on divine aseity as the primary attribute of the Necessary Being in order to show that it is possible to demonstrate the external unity of the Necessary Being without DDS. In other words, he wants to prove the *wāḥidiyya* of God without appealing to His *aḥadiyya*.

Therefore, we have two possibilities. Either the necessity of existence is a genus divided across multiple instances through individual specific differences or it is a species whose instances are individuated by a sufficient number of accidents. However, according to Avicenna, both of these are impossible scenarios. As for the first, he starts by explaining that specific differences do not constitute a part of a genus' definition: 'rational'—for example—is not included in the definition of 'animal'; for it is possible that something is an animal without it necessarily being rational. Therefore, as Avicenna explains, a specific difference 'does not give a genus its essence', but rather 'gives it its subsistence in actuality'.[15] To put this differently, the specific difference confers actual existence (*al-wujūd bi-l-fiʿl*) upon the genus and not its reality or essence (*ḥaqīqa*). We need 'rationality' to give existence to the genus 'animal' in extramental reality, namely in the form of a human being, but we do not need it to give 'animal' its essence. This being the case, Avicenna begins his explanation of why the necessity of existence, in particular, cannot be a genus that is dependent on a specific difference for its actual existence. This is because existence cannot be given to that which is characterised as being necessary of existence, for the necessity *of* existence is nothing but existence of the strongest and most assured kind.[16] As Avicenna explains, 'The reality of the necessity of existence is nothing but the assuredness of existence […] which is why giving existence to the necessity of existence is [tantamount to] fulfilling a condition of its reality'.[17] This remark requires a pause, for it is not immediately clear what Avicenna means by the clause 'fulfilling a condition of its reality' (*ifādatu sharṭin min ḥaqīqatihi*). To understand this, we must connect what

14 If necessity is a genus then each Necessary Being would have necessity as one part of its essence, the other part being their individual specific differences. If it is a species, then every Necessary Being would comprise a genus and specific difference that are different from *wujūb al-wujūd* just as man is different from animal and rational. In both cases the Necessary Beings that possess the necessity of existence are composite entities.

15 Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt* I.7, p. 45 (=Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 36; Marmura modified).

16 To speak of an existence that is stronger and more assured than others implies that existence *per se* is a modulated reality with degrees of intensity. Avicenna does not mention *tashkīk al-wujūd* in his discussion of the unity of the Necessary Being, but it is crucial in my view to acknowledge its importance in the background in order to make sense of his discussions of the necessity of existence as *taʾakkud al-wujūd*. Indeed, this is precisely the way, as we shall see, that Mullā Ṣadrā interprets Avicenna.

17 Avicenna, *al-Shifa*: *al-Ilahiyyat* I.7, p. 45 (=Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 36; Marmura's translation here is problematic). In short, conferring existence upon the necessity of existence is akin to giving something what it already has (*taḥṣīl al-ḥāṣil*).

Avicenna says here with what he has said at the beginning of his discussion at *Ilāhiyyāt* I.7. Recall, that according to Avicenna the function of a specific difference is to give the genus to which it is related its subsistence (or existence) in actuality (*al-qiwām bi-l-fiʿl*) but not its subsistence as an essence *qua* essence. If therefore the necessity of existence were a genus in need of a specific difference, then that specific difference would only serve the purpose of giving it a subsistence in actual reality and not making it subsistent in being *what it is*, viz. 'necessary of existence'.

However, there is a problem with this idea when the genus in question is *wujūb al-wujūd* itself. To explain, let us take *wujūb al-wujūd* as a genus and give it a specific difference. When that specific difference qualifies *wujūb al-wujūd* it gives it its actual existence, its *qiwām bi-l-fiʿl*, given that this is the function of a specific difference, ontologically speaking. However, by giving it actual existence (*al-wujūd bi-l-fiʿl*) the specific difference gives to the necessity of existence the very thing that constitutes its essence, namely, existence itself.[18] For there is no necessity *of existence* if there is no existence. So, by taking the necessity of existence as a genus that is made subsistent due to a specific difference, the specific difference acts in a manner such that it is now 'fulfilling a condition of its reality', meaning that the specific difference gives to the necessity of existence something that constitutes its reality, which no specific difference can do.[19] Hence, the necessity of existence (*wujūb al-wujūd*) cannot be a genus.

Whereas the argument above provides a sound reason to dismiss the characterisation of necessity as a genus, Avicenna's second justification is more explicit in noting the consequences this would have on the aseity of the Necessary Being if necessity were a genus. The argument is a quite simple one: Since the genus, which in our case is the necessity of existence, does not subsist in actuality until and unless it has been modified by a specific difference, it follows that the specific difference is what makes the necessity of existence an *actual* necessity in extramental reality. In that case, every actual instance of the necessity of existence would not be necessary of existence *due to itself* but instead necessary of existence *due to another*, viz. the specific difference. Necessity would therefore always be necessary by another if the necessity of existence were a genus. There would thus be nothing in that case to instantiate the concept of a

18 One could reply to this by arguing that *al-wujūd bi-l-fiʿl* does not constitute the reality or nature of the necessity of existence (*wujūb al-wujūd*). But this hardly makes any sense, however, for that which is necessary of existence has *actual existence* as a necessary property of its very essence. A Necessary Being is precisely just that which exists necessarily in actual reality due to itself. Otherwise, one either demarcates the *wujūd* in *wujūb al-wujūd* as existence in potentiality (*al-wujūd bi-l-quwwa*) or lacking existence altogether. But the first would make whatever has the necessity of existence a contingent being given that whatever has existence in potentiality is *mumkin al-wujūd*. As for the second alternative, it is a plain contradiction: whatever exists necessarily cannot lack existence altogether.

19 As later sections of this paper will focus on the views of Ibn Kammūna, it is worth bearing in mind that Ibn Kammūna considers this to be one of six arguments for the uniqueness of the Necessary Being. See Ibn Kammūna, *al-Kāshif* (*al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*), 413–14.

being that is necessary of existence due to itself. But we know from Avicenna's *burhān al-ṣiddiqīn* that the set of all existent things cannot be confined to just contingent beings and that a Necessary Being must exist. According to Avicenna, then, if the necessity of existence were a genus, it would not be self-sufficient for its actual subsistence, rendering it merely contingent in reality, which contradicts the very notion of what it means to be 'necessary of existence' which is just that a Necessary Being is self-sufficient. By emphasising the modal qualifiers 'due to itself' and 'due to another', Avicenna shows why the necessity of existence that characterises Necessary Beings cannot be a genus, as this ultimately renders every putative instance of 'Necessary Being' necessary *due to another* and therefore merely contingent in themselves.[20]

Avicenna's discussion so far has shown that the distribution and division of the term 'necessary of existence' cannot be akin to a genus divided by differentiae nor a genus divided by accidents. The only option that remains is that it is a species, but he discounts this by arguing that the only plausible way for necessity to be individuated as a species among multiple yet discernible instances would be if it were individuated through individuating accidents, but this has already been shown to be problematic.[21] Each of these arguments seeks to establish the unity of the Necessary Being by first considering necessity as either a genus or a species and then showing that in either scenario any hypothesised Necessary Being would not be a self-sufficient being but would rather depend for its existence on a cause beyond itself for its own actualisation. At no point does Avicenna invoke the doctrine of divine simplicity, but rather hones in on what is to be regarded as the most salient property of necessary existsence, namely, the doctrine of divine aseity. This paves the way for a more general argument in Avicenna's thinking that avoids any specific considerations of necessity as either a genus or species. For Avicenna, since the individuation of multiple Necessary Beings through a consideration of the necessity of existence as either a genus or species and their attendant accidental properties undermines each so-called Necessary Being's intrinsic necessity, the only option that preserves the condition of self-sufficiency on the one hand hand, yet sufficiently accounts for It being individuated on the other, is the option which regards the necessity of existence itself as the individuating principle of the Necessary Being. This eliminates the need

20 Any scenario in which the necessity of existence is actualised by something other than itself contradicts the very notion of what it means to be a necessarily existent thing. Regardless then of whether the necessity of existence is a part-essential predicate or an accidental predicate of each Necessary Being, the conclusion will always be the same: what is necessary of existence by itself is necessary of existence by another, and that is absurd. As Avicenna states, 'The necessity of existence that belongs to each of them individually would be derived from something else, and yet it has been stated that whatever exists necessarily by another does not exist necessarily by itself. Rather it is in and of itself merely contingent. In this case, each and every one of these [Necessary Beings], despite being necessarily existent in itself, would also be possibly existent in and of itself, and that is a contradiction.' Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ: al-Ilāhiyyāt* I.7, p. 44 (=Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 35).

21 Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ: al-Ilahiyyat* I.7, pp. 45–6 (=Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 36).

to consider the necessity of existence as either a genus or a species capable of being instantiated in multiple instances, but at the same time requires that whatever has the necessity of existence as an individuating principle is the only instance of a being that is necessarily existent due to itself. When this is the case, the argument cannot begin with the assumption that there are two or more Necessary Beings.

Avicenna presents this generalised form of the argument toward the end of *Ilāhiyyāt* I.7 and in *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.5 of the *Shifāʾ*, and offers a much-condensed version of the same argument in *Ishārāt* IV.18, which reads as follows:

> The individuated Necessary Being, if Its individuation is due to its being necessarily existent then there is no other Necessary Being besides It. But if Its individuation is not due to that but due to something else, then It is caused. This is because if necessary existence is [(a)] an inseparable accident (*lāzim*) of Its individuation, then existence would either be an inseparable accident of an essence other than it [i.e. other than the necessity of existence] or of an attribute, both of which are impossible. And if it were [(b)] a separable accident (*ʿāriḍ*), then that is more deserving of a cause [than if it were an inseparable accident].[22]

The argument put forward in this passage is by far Avicenna's most important *textual* source for his argument for the Necessary Being's uniqueness (*tawḥīd wājib al-wujūd*) insofar as its historical reception is concerned. Indeed it is this passage and its argument that became the subject of a much-heated debate in the later traditions of Islamic philosophy and thus requires careful examination before turning to the criticisms that were made of it by later figures such as Ibn Kammūna.

The first thing to note is the significance of the surrounding context in which this remark occurs. Immediately before this passage, Avicenna presents a long discussion through *faṣl*s 8–15 in which he establishes the existence of at least one Necessary Being. The existence of *at least one* Necessary Being must therefore be taken for granted, and the question then is whether or not there are any other Necessary Beings. There are then two *faṣl*s that each provide one of two crucial premises in *faṣl*s 16 and 17, respectively, for the completeness of Avicenna's proof of divine unity, after which comes the passage cited above (*faṣl* 18). The reason why it is important to stress the significance of the surrounding context is so that we can understand exactly what Avicenna means when he begins *faṣl* 18 with the subject-term, 'The individuated Necessary Being' (*wājib al-wujūd al-mutaʿayyan*). In my view, these passages are connected and constitute a single train of thought. Avicenna begins *faṣl* 18 by referring to the very same Necessary Being that his discussion up to this point has established as a real being in extramental reality. His

22 Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, IV.18, p. 270. Cf. Ibn Kammūna, *al-Kāshif al-jadīd fī l-ḥikma*, 414.

remarks are therefore directly connected to what has already been said in the previous sections and are a continuation of his discussion of that Necessary Being which has been demonstrated to exist in reality. It is for this reason that the word *mutaʿayyan* enters into Avicenna's thinking and why it is now taken up as a topic for discussion; for whatever exists (and the previous sections have shown that at least one Necessary Being exists) must be individuated (i.e. It must be a *mutaʿayyan*). Unlike the previous discussions in the *Ilāhiyyāt* of the *Shifāʾ* which were based on hypothetical scenarios in which there are a multitude of Necessary Beings that each instantiate the univeresal concept or meaning of *wujūb al-wujūd*, the argument presented in *faṣl* 18 of the *Ishārāt* focusses on a non-hypothetical instance of *wujūb al-wujūd*, namely, 'the individuated Necessary Being' the existence of which has been demonstrated in the previous *faṣl*s. Avicenna therefore does not begin his argument for divine unity in the *Ishārāt* with hypothetical instances of the necessity of existence, but with the fact that there is at least one Necessary Being—thus implying that there is at least one individuated being that instantiates the necessity of existence due to itself. Assuming then that there is at least one Necessary Being—and given that whatever exists must be individuated (*mā lam yatashakhkhaṣ lam yūjad*)—it makes sense for Avicenna to ask what it is that has caused this Necessary Being to be individuated. However, before answering this question, Avicenna provides two important premises in *faṣl*s 16 and 17 that are needed for his proof of divine unity.

The first of these premises (*faṣl* 16) is the following:

> All things differing with respect to their extensions but agreeing with respect to something constituting [their essence] (*muqawwim*) are such that either: [(1)] What they share in common (*mā tattafiqu fīhi*) is a *lāzim* of what they do not share, such that things that are disparate [in nature] have a single *lāzim*—and this is something that cannot be denied. Or they are such that [(2)] What they do not share is a *lāzim* of what they share in common, such that the things which give rise to a single *lāzim* are themselves disparate and [even] opposed to one another in nature—and this is to be denied. Or they are such that [(3)] What they share in common is an *ʿāriḍ* of what they do not share—and the possibility of this cannot be denied. Or they are such that [(4)] What they do not share in common is an *ʿāriḍ* of what they agree on—and the possibility of this also cannot be denied.[23]

This densely packed remark contains some important considerations that are necessary for Avicenna's proof of divine unity. It begins by considering a multitude of things all of which are different from each other extensionally speaking but which have at least one part of their essences in common. Avicenna argues that in situations like this it must be

23 Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, IV.16, p. 269.

the case that each distinct reality that is similar in some respects but dissimilar in others is a combination of things they have in common and things they do not have in common. For example, two human beings must not only have the meaning 'humanity' in common but also other things they do not share; otherwise, as instances of humanity, they would be indiscernible and would not be two human beings but just one. Given that there is always a combination of something common and something unique, Avicenna focuses on the relationship (*nisba*) between these factors, which he calls 'that by which it is the same' (*mā tattafiqu bihi*) and 'that by which it is different' (*mā takhtalifu bihi*). Since the latter of these is the cause of the individuation (*taʿayyun*) of every existent reality, it is this particular notion that is philosophically interesting.

Avicenna argues that there are four possible ways for the converging and diverging aspects of a thing's existence to be related: (1) 'What they share in common' is a *lāzim* of 'what they do not share in common'; (2) 'What they do not share in common' is a *lāzim* of 'what they share in common'; (3) 'What they share in common' is an *ʿāriḍ* of 'what they do not share in common'; and (4) 'What they do not share in common' is an *ʿāriḍ* of 'what they do share in common'. To make sense of these combinations, we must start by clarifying the difference between two types of accidents known as *lawāzim* (sing. *lāzim*) and *ʿawāriḍ* (sing. *āriḍ*) on the one hand, and the term *muqawwim* on the other.[24] The difference between them is explained by Avicenna himself in his *Manṭiq al-mashriqiyyīn*:

> Every predicate that predicates a thing without complete correspondence is either a *muqawwim*, a *lāzim* or an *ʿāriḍ*. The *muqawwim* [of a thing] is whatever is in the essence itself of a thing such that its essence is comprised of it and something else. The *lāzim* is whatever must be predicated of a thing after its essence has been actualised in reality. The *ʿāriḍ* is whatever has been predicated of a thing but it is not necessary for that thing to be predicated with it all the time. What the *muqawwim* and the *lāzim* share in common is that neither of them can be separated from the thing [they predicate]. What the *lāzim* and *ʿāriḍ* share in common is that each of them is extraneous to the essence of the thing [they predicate] but attaches to it after [it has been completed as an essence].[25]

Every predicate is either constitutive of its subject's essence or not. If it is constitutive, then it is a *muqawwim*. If it is a non-constitutive predicate, then it is either impossible to separate it from the essence that it predicates or not. If it is the former then it is a

24 The terms *lāzim* and *muqawwim* are both mentioned in *faṣl* 16, whereas the terms *lawāzim* and *ʿawāriḍ* are both mentioned in *faṣl* 18 which contains the formal proof of divine unity.

25 Avicenna, *Manṭiq al-mashriqiyyīn*, eds. M. al-Khaṭīb and ʿA. al-Qatlā (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1328/1910), 13–14. For a detailed breakdown of Avicenna's theory of constitutive and non-constitutive properties and their types, see Riccardo Strobino, *Avicenna's Theory of Science: Logic, Metaphysics, Epistemology* (California: University of California Press, 2021), 183–192.

lāzim, but otherwise it is an *ʿāriḍ*. By identifying constitutive predicates as essential predicates and non-constitutive predicates as non-essential predicates, we can summarise Avicenna's description of *lawāzim* and *ʿawāriḍ* by defining a *lāzim* as 'any non-essential but inseparable predicate of a thing' and an *ʿāriḍ* as 'any non-essential but separable predicate of a thing'.[26] A *muqawwim*, by contrast, is an essential part of the essence it predicates and thus forms a part of its definition, its 'whatness' or quiddity (*māhiyya*). By distinguishing two kinds of accidents as being either capable of being separated from their subjects or not, Avicenna distinguishes between a 'strong relation' of accidentality known as *luzūm* and a 'weak relation' of accidentality known as *ʿurūḍ*. Whereas the subject (*maʿrūḍ*) which is predicated by a certain *ʿāriḍ* is capable of having or not having that predicate, the subject (*malzūm*) and predicate (*lāzim*) of a *luzūm* relationship can never be separated from each other, even though the predicate in question does not constitute the essence of the subject.

Now, according to *faṣl* 16, Avicenna maintains that the *lawāzim* of a single essence are always the same. For example, if the essence of humanity produces a certain *lāzim* in one instance then it must produce the same *lāzim* in *every* instance of that essence. Moreover, he maintains that it is impossible for one essence to have certain *lawāzim* or concomitant properties in some instances but entirely different *lawāzim* in other instances of the same meaning—all things being equal. For example, it is impossible that 'animal' has the *lāzim* 'rationality' in some animals and 'the absence of rationality' in others. This is because the *lawāzim* of an essence are inseparable from it.[27] In our example, this would mean that both 'rationality' and the 'absence of rationality' are inseparable from 'animal', itself a contradiction since no animal is both rational and non-rational at the same time in the same way. What this example demonstrates is that if two things have something in common, their *lawāzim* cannot be different insofar as that common meaning is concerned. The key point therefore is that their *lawāzim* cannot be the cause of their individuations (*taʿyyunāt*). This is what Avicenna means when he states that what discernible things do not share in common (*mā takhtalifu bihi*)—namely, the *taʿayyun* that causes each thing's individuation—cannot be a *lāzim* of what they do share in common (*mā tattafiqu fihi*)—namely, whatever shared meaning they have in common. In other words, a thing's individuating properties cannot be shared in any respect whatsoever. Therefore, the individuations that cause things to be different cannot be grounded in

26 Avicenna provides examples for each of these terms in the passage immediately following the one quoted above: 'An example of a *muqawwim* is "being a shape" for a triangle or "being a body" for a human. An example of a *lāzim* is a triangle being equal to two right angles […] An example of an *ʿāriḍ* is a human being old or young or any of the other states that to occur to human.' (Ibid., 14)

27 Because such predicates are inseparable from their subjects, they are necessarily true of their subjects. For example, it is necessarily true that four is an even number, even though even number is not part of the essence of four.

the inseparable accidents (*lāzim*) of their shared meaning.[28] As a result, option 2 in the list above cannot be true.

As for the possibility that discernible things have a shared *lāzim* in common but are in and of themselves essentially different (option 1), Avicenna does not regard this as being impossible. An example of this is 'animal' and its association (or *nisba*) to 'rational' and 'non-rational' in two distinct beings such as Zayd and this particular dog called Lassie. What Zayd and Lassie have in common is that they are both animals; 'animal' here is the converging factor or that respect in which they are the same ('*mā tattafiqu fīhi*'). However, in Zayd's case, 'animality' is inseparable from rationality given that Zayd cannot be a human otherwise, and likewise for Lassie in whom 'animality' is inseparable from her being non-rational. This demonstrates that in the case of two distinct essences such as Zayd (a human) and Lassie (a dog), one of which has rationality and the other non-rationality, the meaning 'animal' is an inseparable accident of the very things by which each is differentiated from the other.[29] In Zayd's case, what differentiates him *qua* human from Lassie *qua* dog is his rational faculty, yet the meaning 'animal' is inseparable from 'rationality'. The same is true in Lassie's case. What differentiates her *qua* dog from Zayd is her lacking a rational faculty, albeit that whatever makes inchoate sounds by volition must be an animal. 'Animal' therefore is also an inseparable predicate of Lassie's 'non-rationality'.

Having considered the 'strong' relationship of *luzūm*, we are left with the 'weak' relationship of *ʿurūḍ*. However, unlike the case of *luzūm* Avicenna does not consider either of the possibilities (options 3 and 4) connected with *ʿurūḍ* as problematic. Two distinct realities may have something in common but can nevertheless be differentiated through different *ʿawāriḍ*,[30] or they may have a certain *ʿāriḍ* in common and still be individuated through essences that are different.[31] This means that out of the four possible combina-

28 In the context of our discussion, then, we can formulate the following line of reasoning. If there were two (or more) Necessary Beings, each Necessary Being would share the meaning necessary of existence due to itself with every other Necessary Being. However, in order for each Necessary Being to be an individuated being there has to be a unique individuation for each Necessary Being. Now, if what individuates and differentiates each Necessary Being is a *lāzim* of necessary of existence due to itself, then every instance of necessary of existence due to itself would have that *lāzim*. In this case, the *lāzim* of each Necessary Being is no longer its *taʿayyun* since every Necessary Being shares the same *lāzim*. Hence, the *lawāzim* of necessary of existence due to itself cannot be what individuates each Necessary Being.

29 That is, if Zayd is referred to as a 'rational being' and Lassie as a 'non-rational being', then 'animal' is an inseparable accident of both.

30 In this case, the *ʿawāriḍ* are what cause their individuations. The example given by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) is humanity and whatever its accidents are in two different human beings; for 'this human' and 'that human' are the same in virtue of their humanity, but different individuals insofar as one is a 'this' and the other is a 'that' as a result of their different accidents. See Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Ḥall mushkilāt al-Ishārāt*, 3:30.

31 The example given by al-Ṭūsī is 'existence', which is a separable accident of 'this substance' and 'this accident'—as in the statements, 'This substance exists' and 'This accident exists' where two distinct essences have the predicate 'exists' in common. See Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, ed. Ḥasanzādah al-Āmulī (Qom: Būstān-i Kitāb, 1386Sh/[2007–2008]), 1:570.

tions between the converging and diverging factors of a being that is individuated, only option 1 is impossible. Hence, no being is ever indivduated such that its common factor is an inseparable accident (*lāzim*) of its individuation.

The second premise, offered in *faṣl* 17, draws out the aetiological implications of what has been stated in *faṣl* 16. Accidents by their nature require a subject to exist. In some cases, the subject itself is what causes the existence of the accident, and this is what characterises the strong relation of *luzūm*. In other cases, the accidents in question have their existence grounded in a subject but are caused by something other than the subject itself. For example, a particular human being's 'blackness' has the accident 'black' caused by something other than humanity *per se*. In other words, 'black' is grounded in Zayd but is not caused by his humanity *qua* humanity. Accidents like this are what Avicenna refers to as *ʿawāriḍ*. The *lawāzim*, by contrast, are not only grounded in a subject but are caused by the very essence of that subject, which is the reason why they have a 'strong relationship' of accidentality. Avicenna discusses the aetiological properties of accidents and their relation to their subjects in *faṣl* 17, focusing in particular on the accident 'existence'.

> It is sometimes admissible that the quiddity of a thing is a cause of one of its properties [i.e. one of its *lawāzim*], or that one of its properties is a cause for another property [i.e. one of its first-order *lawāzim* is a cause of a second-order property]—as in the case, for example, of the specific difference [i.e. a *muqawwim*] being a cause of a proprium [i.e. a *lāzim*]. However, it is not admissible for existence to be a property belonging to a thing and for that property to be caused by that thing's quiddity when its quiddity is not existence, or, for that matter, for it to be caused by another property. The reason for that is because the cause is always prior in existence [to the effect]; and there is nothing prior in existence before existence.[32]

Avicenna identifies two kinds of properties (accidents) in this remark. Some properties, he says, are caused by the very essence (or a part thereof) of the subjects they predicate. For example, as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī explains in his commentary on the *Ishārāt*, the essence of twoness is what gives rise to and causes the meaning of evenness.[33] In this case, evenness is a *lāzim* of twoness. As for a part of a thing's essence being the cause of some of its accidental properties, the example that Ṭūsī provides is that of the specific difference 'rational' causing the proprium 'astonishment', which in turn causes the property 'laugther', all of which are grounded in the specific difference which forms a part of the very essence of humanity. However, as Ṭūsī explains, the difference between existence and all other properties is that 'all of the other properties only exist by virtue

32 Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, IV.17, p. 270.

33 al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt,* 1:570.

of the quiddity, whereas the quiddity [itself] exists [only] by virtue of existence.'[34] This means that existence has an ontological priority over everything else, implying that essence cannot precede existence. Existence cannot be the effect of something other than existence, namely, quiddity, and the existence of one thing can only be caused by the *existence* of something else. A quiddity such as humanity that does not have existence as part of its essence, therefore, cannot be the cause of existence, whether this be its own existence or the existence of something else, as this would imply that something other than existence is the cause of existence.[35]

The two premises which Avicenna discusses and which he will use to formulate his argument for divine unity can therefore be summarised as follows. In *faṣl* 16, he explains that whenever two things share some meaning in common there must also be something which they do not share in order for them to be two discernible entities. The relationship between these elements is either one of 'strong concomitance' (*luzūm*) or 'weak accidentally' (*ʿurūḍ*).[36] However, as accidents, both must be due to a cause.[37] Then in *faṣl* 17, Avicenna explains that *wujūd* cannot be a *lāzim* of *māhiyya*. Since the entire discussion appears in the context of an investigation into the Necessary Being, the conclusion that ought to be drawn from all of this is that divine existence (*wujūd*) is either a *muqawwim* of the Necessary Being or an *ʿāriḍ*, but never a *lāzim* of Its quiddity.[38] The argument for divine unity is then fleshed out as follows:

(1) There is at least one Necessary Being.[39]
(2) Every existent is something individuated.[40]
(3) Therefore, this Necessary Being is an individuated existent.
(4) The cause of this Necessary Being's individuation is either (4a) due to Its being

34 al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 1:570–71 (*wa-l-farq bayn al-wujūd wa-sāʾir al-ṣifāt hāhunā anna sāʾir al-ṣifāt innamā yūjad bi-sabab al-māhiyya wa-l-māhiyya tūjad bi-sabab al-wujūd*).

35 This itself being an instance of the general philosophical principle that 'whatever lacks something, cannot give it to something else' (*fāqid al-shayʾ lā yuʿṭīhi*).

36 I borrow these translations from Mayer, 'Faḫr Ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī's Critique of Avicenna's Argument for the Unity of God in the *Išārāt*, and Naṣīr ad-Dīn Ṭūsī's Defence', 202.

37 In Islamic philosophy, the principle that all non-essential predicates of a thing are caused is stated in the Arabic expression '*kullu ʿaraḍī maʿlūl*'. The word *ʿaraḍī* here (as opposed to *ʿaraḍ*) denotes any non-essential—and therefore accidental—predicate of a thing and encompasses both separable (*ʿawāriḍ*) and non-separable (*lawāzim*) accidents of an essence.

38 This is not because the Necessary Being has no quiddity besides existence itself, but because of the fact that no quiddity *qua* itself precedes existence in being and cannot therefore be the cause of its own existence. It is important for this to be highlighted because Avicenna has not yet proven the simplicity of the Necessary Being, the argument for which is fleshed in the course of *faṣl*s 20–22. In other words, this particular version of Avicenna's proof of divine unity does not rely on the premise that the Necessary Being is a simple being, even though, as Avicenna duly demonstrates, no Necessary Being can be a composite reality.

39 This is the conclusion of the argument Avicenna provides for the existence of a Necessary Being in *faṣl*s 8–15.

40 Based on the principle '*al-shayʾ mā lam yatashakhkhaṣ lam yūjad*'.

necessarily existent or (4b) because of something else.

(5) If (4a), then nothing else can have this meaning.[41] (Hence, there is only one Necessary Being. QED.)

(6) However, if (4b), then this Necessary Being needs something else to individuate It.

(7) In that case, the relationship between Its shared meaning ('necessarily existent') and Its individuation is such that either: (7a) Its being necessarily existent is a *lāzim* of Its quiddity; or (7b) Its being necessarily existent is an *ʿāriḍ* of Its quiddity; or (7c) Its individuation is an *ʿāriḍ* of Its being necessarily existent; or (7d) Its individuation is a *lāzim* of Its being necessarily existent.

(8) However, 7a–d all imply that the Necessary Being is caused (*kullū ʿaraḍī maʿlūl*).

(9) The Necessary Being cannot be caused.

(10) Therefore, the Necessary Being cannot be individuated in any of the ways mentioned in 7a–d.

(11) Therefore, this Necessary Being's individuation is due to Its being necessarily existent.[42]

(12) Therefore, there is only *one* Necessary Being—*this* individuated Necessary Being (QED).

This remarkable argument for the unity of the Necessary Being (*tawḥīd wājib al-wujūd*) relies on nothing else apart from the notion of existence and its being necessarily existent. It emphasises the definition of what it means to exist necessarily by underscoring the importance of such a being's independence and self-sufficiency, and in doing so gives special importance to divine aseity. For this reason, the argument turns on statement 9: the aseity of a being that exists necessarily means just that the Necessary Being has within itself the ground and sufficient reason for its own existence. In other words, the Necessary Being cannot be caused by anything other than itself. But all of the possible ways of It being individuated by something other than itself mentioned in 7a–d imply that It is caused.[43] The argument thus demonstrates that this individuated Necessary

41 This is because being 'necessarily existent' is the individuation of this Necessary Being; and the individuations of each and every individuated being cannot be shared with other beings given that this would otherwise imply that 'what they share in common' (*mā tattafiqu fīhi*) is identical to 'what they do not share in common' (*mā taftariqu bihi*).

42 According to Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī this means that the particular existence (*al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ*) that belongs to the Necessary Being is sufficient for Its own individuation. This is important as it deflects the historical misunderstanding of some of Avicenna's commentators that necessity is extentionally different to the existence of the Necessary Being.

43 For the sake of comprehensiveness, it may be useful to explain exactly why each of the possibilities in 7a–d are impossible. The suggestion in 7a is that the essence (*māhiyya*) of the Necessary Being is the cause of Its individuation, and that 'being necessarily existent' is an inseparable accident of that essence. This means that the divine essence is the ontological cause of the Necessary Being's 'necessary existence'; the essence of the Necessary Being is the *malzūm lahu* and Its 'necessary existence' is the *lāzim*. However, Avicenna rejects this suggestion in *faṣl* 17 where he explains that no essence can be the

Being is individuated by nothing else apart from the sheer fact that it exists necessarily, and because of this there can be only one Necessary Being. It seems, therefore, that according to Avicenna, divine aseity is what grounds a proof of divine unity. Any being that exists necessarily is individuated by its necessary existence to be the only being of its kind. This is because the property of existing necessarily must itself be the individuating principle of a Necessary Being and thus cannot be shared with any other being. Hence, there are no beings other than this being that has this property, and thus there is only one being that has the property of existing necessarily due to Itself.

2. The *Shubha* of Ibn Kammūna

Although the historicity of the so-called 'doubt' (*shubha*) of Ibn Kammūna is not the main focus of this study, it is worth stressing that Ibn Kammūna was not the first thinker to criticise Avicenna's proof of divine unity. The Ashʿarī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī had already questioned the possibility of the predicate 'necessary of existence due to itself' being predicable of more than one Necessary Being in his *Kitāb al-Muḥaṣṣal*.[44] Notwithstanding such criticisms, however, it was the 'doubt' raised by Ibn Kammūna

cause of Its own existence since nothing precedes existence in being. Hence 7a is false. The suggestion in 7b is that 'being necessarily existent' is a separable accident of the Necessary Being's essence. In this case, the divine essence is the *maʿrūḍ lahu* and 'being necessarily existent' is the *ʿāriḍ*. However, this is impossible because not only does every *ʿāriḍ* require a cause separate from the essence it predicates, but also because the essence itself (which is not necessary of existence due to itself) needs a cause for its existence. Hence 7b is also false. The suggestion in 7c is that the Necessary Being's individuation is a separable accident of Its 'being necessarily existent'. In this case, 'being necessarily existent' is the *maʿrūḍ lahu* and the individuation of the Necessary Being is the *ʿāriḍ*. However, this too is clearly impossible because it makes the Necessary Being's existence dependent on the very same cause that causes Its individuation to occur to It. In other words, since every *ʿāriḍ* is ontologically dependent on a separate cause different to the essence it predicates, and since that separate cause is what causes the Necessary Being's individuation, it follows by transitivity of causation that this separate cause also causes the existence of the Necessary Being. Hence 7c is also false. Finally, the suggestion in 7d is that the individuation of the Necessary Being is an inseparable accident of Its 'being necessarily existent'. This means that the individuation is the lāzim and 'being necessarily existent' is the *malzūm lahu*. But this too is false since in order for 'necessary existence' to be a cause of that individuation (as would be necessary in the case of every *lāzim*) it would first need to exist; for nothing is a cause of anything unless it is first an actual existent. But in order for it to exist it must be individuated, which therefore implies that it is both individuated and not inviduated before causing its own individuation, and that is clearly absurd. Therefore, all of the options are false. For a detailed explication of these categories and their ensuing impossibility, see al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 1:580–84. Notice that in all of these arguments there is only one Necessary Being being considered alongside the various metaphysical configurations between Its essence, existence and inviduation.

44 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Muḥaṣṣal: wa-huwa Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-muta'akhkhirīn min al-ḥukamā' wa-l-mutakallimīn*, ed. Ḥusayn Atāʾī (Qom: Intishārāt al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, 1999), 182–83. Rāzī's suggestion is based on an equivocal understanding of the term 'necessary existence'. It is worth bearing in mind that Ibn Kammūna was familiar with the *Muḥaṣṣal* of Rāzī and Ṭūsī's rebuttal of it. See Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ʿIzz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1248) and His Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 79–83.

that gained widespread noteriety and scholarly engagement in the eastern lands of Islam from the late fifteenth century. The Shiraz-based philosopher Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502) seems to have played an important role in this regard, for not only did he draw attention to Ibn Kammūna's criticisms but reinforced them even further in his commentary on Suhrawardī's *Hayākil al-nūr* titled *Shawākil al-ḥūr fī sharḥ Hayākil al-nūr*.[45] The subsequent reception of Dawānī's writings in the early Safavid period popularised the so-called '*shubhat al-tawḥīd*' (as it was later known) among a host of thinkers, many of whom wrote independent treatises responding to the *shubha*.[46]

Ibn Kammūna discusses proofs for the uniqueness of the Necessary Being across a range of texts, but his criticisms of Avicenna's proof in the *Ishārāt* are first mentioned in a relatively short work titled *al-Maṭālib al-muhimma min ʿilm al-ḥikma*, which he completed in Shaʿbān 657/July–August 1259.[47] In the section concerning God's uniqueness, Ibn Kammūna begins by first outlining the general Avicennian argument for the Necessary Being's oneness. Though he paraphrases Avicenna's argument with slightly different philosophical terminology, the argument remains Avicennian at its core. The discussion centres on the claim that the species 'existing necessarily' (*wājib al-wujūd*) must be confined to a single individual (*shakhṣ wāḥid*). To demonstrate this, Ibn Kammūna imagines a scenario in which there are two Necessary Beings sharing the same essence but with different ipseities, which is necessary if they are to exist as two distinct realities. This leads to a disjunctive proposition: either the ipseity (*huwiyya*) of each Necessary Being is identical to its essence, which in this case happens to be 'existing necessarily', or it is something additional (and therefore different) to it. Since the *huwiyya* of each Necessary Being is what makes it an individual it is obvious that Ibn Kammūna has the principle of individuation in mind and that it is the same in meaning as Avicenna's notion of *taʿayyun*.

Now, if the individuation (*huwiyya*) of each Necessary Being is identical to its essence, then the conclusion would lead to the desired outcome that there can be only one individual that instatiates the species (or essence) 'existing necessarily'. However, if the individuation of each Necessary Being is additional to its essence then this implies that each Necessary Being's individuation is an accidental property, which Ibn Kammūna argues results in two impossibilities. Of these, the first impossibility is the one that is most pertitent: every accident requires a cause, and the cause of each Necessary Being's individuation in this case would either be the divine essence itself or something else

45 Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī, *Shawāwil al-ḥūr fī sharḥ Hayākil al-nūr*, ed. Muḥammad Rajab ʿAlī Ḥasan (Amman: Dār al-Fatḥ Li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 2023), 292–317.

46 See Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ʿIzz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1248) and His Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 49–51. The list of scholars mentioned include ʿAlī b. Faḍl Allāh al-Jīlānī (Gīlānī) al-Fūmānī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Niʿmat Allāh al-Jīlānī ('Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī', d. 1064/1654), ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Lāhijī (d. 1072/1661), Āqā Ḥusayn b. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Khwānsārī (d. 1098/1687), and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Sarāb Tunikābūnī (d. 1124/1712).

47 Ibn Kammūna, 'al-Maṭālib al-muhimma min ʿilm al-ḥikma,' *Khiradnāmah-i Ṣadrā* 8, no. 32 (2003): 64–86. For more on this work, see Pourjavady and Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad*, 92–3.

entirely. If the divine essence itself causes the accident, then the accident is a *lāzim* (Ibn Kammūna does not use this term) and as such cannot serve as an individuating principle of two Necessary Beings having the same essence, as shown by Avicenna. If, however, the accident is caused by something else entirely, then this leads to the absurd conclusion that the Necessary Being is dependent on something other than itself for its existence.[48]

Ibn Kammūna's reasoning here captures Avicenna's own individuation-based argument for divine unity albeit for one crucial difference. According to Ibn Kammūna, the argument does not go as far Avicenna intended because although it demonstrates that there cannot be two Necessary Beings having *the same essence*, it does not take into consideration how the situation might change *if they had different essences*. Indeed, the argument began with the assumption that there are two Necessary Beings having the species/essence 'existing necessarily' in common and from there proceeded to show why this is impossible. However, according to Ibn Kammūna, this does not prove *tawḥīd* absolutely, since it does not rule out the possibility of there being two (or more) Necessary Beings that share nothing in common insofar as their essences are concerned. As he writes after presenting Avicenna's argument,

> [F]rom this it becomes clear that the existence of two Necessary Beings sharing the *same* essence is impossible, but this demonstration does not yield the conclusion that it is impossible for two Necessary Beings to exist absolutely; for it is conceivable—rationally speaking—that there are two beings in existence whose species are confined to a single individual and which share the necessity of existence, since, as you are aware, necessity is something non-existential. If this is something impossible, then its impossibility must be proven by a demonstration other than this one, but I have yet to come across it other than through the methods that are mixed [with a consideration of] how the efficient cause [causes the existence] of the world.[49]

As Pourjavady and Schmidtke observe, this passage was included by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī in his *Shawākil al-ḥūr* and explicitly attributed to Ibn Kammūna.[50] Furthermore, Dawānī explains that his predecessor considered the plurality of Necessary Beings to be categorically impossible in his *al-Kāshif*, suggesting that Ibn Kammūna had found a solution to his own doubt after all.[51] Indeed a significant portion of the *Kāshif* seems to address the very problem that had been raised by Ibn Kammūna in his earlier work *al-Maṭālib al-muhimma*. Ibn Kammūna here writes that regardless of whether two Necessary Beings belong to the same species *or not* a plurality of Necessary Beings is impossible.

48 Ibn Kammūna, 'al-Maṭālib al-muhimma', 77.
49 Ibn Kammūna, 'al-Maṭālib al-muhimma', 78; cf. Ibn Kammūna, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥāt*, 3:177.
50 See al-Dawānī, *Shawākil al-ḥūr*, 166.
51 al-Dawānī, *Shawākil al-ḥūr*, 166.

If they have the same essence, then Avicenna's proof of divine unity suffices. If they have different essences, then the necessity of existence would be neither identical to each of their essences (since this entails they have the same essence) nor a constituent part of their essences either (since this entails their being composite).[52] Therefore, two Necessary Beings, each one being the sole instance of its own unique species, would be such that they share the necessity of existence not as a single species or essence but as a concomitant property (*ʿaraḍī lāzim*) of two distinct essences.[53] This means that the necessity they have in common is something that lies outside of their essences, and that their essences, being entirely different from each other, serve as the principle by which they are individuated as unique Necessary Beings. This is precisely what later scholars refered to as 'the *shubha* of Ibn Kammūna' even though Ibn Kammūna himself rejects it in his work *al-Kāshif al-jadīd*.

> If the existence of two Necessary Beings each belonging to a different species were possible, then the property 'necessity of existence' would have been an inseparable accident for both Necessary Beings, each having the necessity of existence in common but being entirely distinct from it nevertheless by virtue of its essence. In this case, the essence (*maʿrūḍ*) that is predicated with the necessity of existence would not be necessarily existent in itself, but not in the sense that it is incapable of existing necessarily but rather in the sense that it is possible for the intellect to consider that essence by itself without considering that existence [which is predicated of it as an accidental concomitant]. Hence, the essence of the subject being predicated [i.e. the essence of each Necessary Being] cannot be the cause [of this accident], for nothing is a cause unless it exists extramentally. Otherwise, this entails that its existence precedes its own existence [and that is impossible]. Furthermore, the accident [that two Necessary Beings share, i.e. 'necessity of existence'] is not in itself necessary because it does not exist outside of the mind without first being specified [for each Necessary Being] so as to remove its community [i.e. its being a universal]. Therefore, if it is not itself necessary, it has to be contingent, which means that it requires a cause beyond that which it predicates. As a result, each Necessary Being requires a cause beyond itself for its existence, thus leading to the conclusion that each Necessary Being is not something that exists necessarily, and that is absurd.[54]

52 Ibn Kammūna, *al-Kāshif* (*al-jadīd fī l-ḥikma*), 416.

53 Ibn Kammūna is here following Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī in characterising the necessity of each Necessary Being as a concomitant accidental (*ʿaraḍī lāzim*).

54 Ibn Kammūna, *al-Kāshif* (*al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*), 417. For a useful study of Ibn Kammūna's arguments for God's uniqueness, see Ahmed Alwishah, 'Suhrawardī and Ibn Kammūna on the Impossibility of Having Two Necessary Existents,' in *Illuminationist Texts and Textual Studies: Studies in Memory of Hossein Ziai*, eds. Ali Gheissari, John Walbridge and Ahmed Alwishah (Leiden: Brill, 2018): 115–134.

While he appears to have resolved any personal doubts about the proofs concerned with demonstrating the Necessary Being's uniqueness, Ibn Kammūna's 'doubt' took on a life of its own in the centuries after his death. Later scholars took the original argument seriously, and from the early Safavid period onwards the problem of proving the Necessary Being's uniqueness gained increasing notoreity. The problem persisted in the works of numerous scholars who not only grappled with its implications but who, over time, reinforced it, signaling that it could not simply be ignored. By refining and modifying Ibn Kammūna's original *shubha*, later scholars underscored that his doubt was not as easily dismissed as he himself had suggested in the *Kāshif*. Though transformed and refined, the doubt endured. Ironically, it was Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī who, for dialectical reasons, refuted Ibn Kammūna's own attempt to disprove his earlier doubts—ultimately, what later became known as the '*shubha* of Ibn Kammūna' was, in reality, Dawānī's rebuttal.[55]

By the late sixteenth century, the so-called *shubha* of Ibn Kammūna had developed into one of the key *problemata* within the Shiraz and Isfahan schools of philosophy. In some scholars minds it demonstrated the rational plausibility of there being more than one Necessary Being without this leading to any of the undesirable consequences outlined by Avicenna in his individuation-based argument for divine unity.[56] To appreciate why this was so, we need to remind ourselves of some of the key steps in Avicenna's reasoning. The first and most important of these is that Avicenna basis his argument on the principle of individuation and the various ways that something can be individuated. For Avicenna, if there are two or more Necessary Beings then the principle of their individuation is either something that comprises the very essence of each Necessary Being or something accidental. The first implies compositionality, the second that whatever exists necessarily is necessary of existence due to another and not due to itself, both of which entail that each Necessary Being is caused. Hence, there is only one Necessary Being.

Ibn Kammūna accepts that these are two ways in which things may be individuated, but crucially he does not accept that these are the only ways. This is because, according to Ibn Kammūna, Avicenna ignores the possibility that two Necessary Beings are individuated by their very essences as a whole and not due to constituent parts. This being the case, argues Ibn Kammūna, it is conceivable that there are two Necessary Beings that have no parts whatsoever (thereby preserving DDS) but which nonetheless possess essences that are wholly distinct from each other, this being the sufficient cause of their individuations. They are, as eloquently expressed in the original Arabic, *mutabāyina bi-tamām al-dhāt*—entirely distinct from each other and not merely partially so.[57] Ibn

55 See al-Dawānī, *Shawākil al-ḥūr*, 293–94.

56 For example, the Safavid philosopher Āqā Ḥusayn Khwānsārī, *al-Ḥāshiya 'alā l-Shifā'* (*al-Ilāhiyyāt*), ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Iṣfahānī (Qom: Dabīrkhānah-i Kangarah Āqā Ḥusayn Khwānsārī, 1378Sh/[1999–2000]), 296–97.

57 As many later thinkers have noted, the ten Aristotelian categories (*maqūlāt*) are essences that are entirely distinct from one another *bi-tamām al-dhāt*—that is, they are distinct *per se* and in their entirety,

Kammūna therefore avoids the first of Avicenna's anticipated problems, namely, the problem of composition in the Necessary Being.

The second reason why the *shubha* could not be so easily dismissed was because it brought into sharper focus the ontological status of necessity itself. If each of the two hypothesised Necessary Beings is a simple reality with no internal relations among parts and entirely distinct in nature from every other essence, then the necessity that characterises them cannot be identical to their essences, as this either requires the need for another essential part (but this is barred since each Necessary Being is assumed to be a simple reality) or the existence of an accidental property that individuates each Necessary Being (but this is also barred since each Necessary Being is *ex hypothesi* individuated by its very essence). Ibn Kammūna argues that it is still justified to apply the term 'necessarily existent' for each Necessary Being by stating that even though the expression does not refer to an actual property outside the mind it is nonetheless an accurate description of each Necessary Being upon consideration. In other words, he considers the notion of a thing being necessarily existent to be *iʿtibārī* and does not think it is necessary for all meanings to have a one-to-one correspondence with things in extramental reality.[58] Such notions are conjured in the mind upon the intellect's consideration of them but do not as such pick out actual properties within things themselves. It is crucial to note that considerations of this kind are not mere fictions conjured out of nowhere. Rather, the object upon which the intellectual act of consideration is performed is something which itself possesses actual existence in extramental reality. Whatever intellectual operations are performed on it are therefore operations grounded in the objective reality of that very thing itself.[59] The language of Islamic philosophers is highly significant in this regard: *iʿtibārī*-terms like 'possibility' and 'necessity' are thought of as being 'extrapolated' or 'extracted' from something else, implying that their existence—albeit of a purely mental character—is derived from something more primitive than the *iʿtibāri* concepts themselves. Those things from which the mind extracts *iʿtibārī* concepts are referred to as the ground, or, more literally, 'the source from which *iʿtibārī* concepts are extrapolated' (*mabdaʾ al-intizāʿ*), the language of which intimates that *iʿtibārī* concepts

rather than due to any shared constituent. If they were differentiated by only a part of their essence, they would necessarily share a common element, which would, in turn, imply the existence of a higher genus encompassing them. This would contradict their status as the highest genera of being, as they would then be subsumed under a more fundamental category.

58 For example, the proposition 'The chair is contingent' does not entail that the predicate 'contingent' has an existence of its own apart from the existence of the chair. In other words, the terms within the proposition 'The chair is contingent' pick out one item of existence—namely, the chair's existence. The word 'contingent' is therefore *iʿtibārī* in the sense that when the intellect considers the quiddity of the subject-term 'chair' in relation to its extramental existence it contrives the notion of it being a contingent being. This is in contrast to a more direct realist conception of language in which each of the proposition's terms picks out a separate item of existence.

59 This of course assumes that the intellect is not sullied or influenced by the non-intellectual powers of the soul.

are not mere subjective notions but ideas grounded in the objective reality of things themselves.[60] For our purposes, it suffices that for Ibn Kammūna the characterisation of each divine ipseity as being something that is necessarily existent due to itself is an *iʿtibārī* characterisation of their extramental essences which in themselves are unknown (*majhūl al-kunh*).[61] The name 'Necessary Being' does not pick out a corresponding attribute or property called *wujūb al-wujūd* in extramental existence, but nonetheless is a valid way of speaking and referring to those simple divine ipseities. The implications of this are far-reaching and have significant metaphysical consequences, particularly insofar as they help Ibn Kammūna avoid some of the pitfalls identified by Avicenna in his arguments against divine multiplicity.

Firstly, like Avicenna, Ibn Kammūna preserves the ontological requirement that all existent things must be individuated by maintaining that what causes each Necessary Being's individuation is none other than their unique essences, a consideration ignored by Avicenna. However, this means that the necessity of each Necessary Being is not to be regarded *pace* Avicenna as the essence of each Necessary Being nor a part thereof. Rather, according to Ibn Kammūna, each Necessary Being's necessity is an *iʿtibārī* (as opposed to *ḥaqīqī*) concept extracted by the mind's contemplation of those extramental ipseities. This in turn has two important consequences. The first is that each Necessary Being shares a non-essential property known as its necessity, which is important because we would not otherwise be able to speak of more than one Necessary Being. This necessity is *iʿtibārī*, meaning that it is an accident of those ipseities *in the mind* as opposed to a real accident of theirs in extramental existence.

This leads to the second outcome which is that the standard philosophical view which asserts that all accidental properties are caused (*kullu ʿaraḍī maʿlūl*) is now restricted in scope to exclude properties that are *iʿtibārī*. Later philosophers in the Shīʿī tradition such as Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī (d. 1289/1873) and al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1402/1981) explain the basis for this exclusion by first distinguishing between two kinds of predicates known as *al-maḥmūl bi-l-ḍamīma* and *al-khārij al-maḥmūl* (also known as *al-maḥmūl min ṣamīmihi*).[62] For the sake of simplicity, we can loosely translate these as 'predicates added to their subjects' and 'predicates extracted from their subjects', respectively. Let us

60 For more on the history and importance of *iʿtibārī* concepts, see Jari Kaukua, '*Iʿtibārī* Concepts in Suhrawardī: The Case of Substance', *Oriens* 48 (2020): 40–66.

61 The epistemic point about their essences being unknown was added and highlighted by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī.

62 See al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Nihāyat al-ḥikma*, ed. ʿAbbās ʿAlī Zurāʿī Sabzawārī (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī al-Tābiʿa Li-Jamāʿat al-Mudarrisīn), 2:130–131; cf. Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Manẓūma fī l-manṭiq wa-l-ḥikma*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar (Qom: Manshūrāt-i Bīdār, 1432/[2010–2011]), 1:39; idem., *Sharḥ al-asmāʾ aw Sharḥ Duʿā al-Jawshan al-kabīr*, ed. Najafqulī Ḥabībī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishghāh-i Ṭihrān, 1385Sh/[2006–2007]), 373–74. The distinction is alluded to by Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, ed. Muḥammad Żabīḥī and Jaʿfar Shāh-Naẓarī (Tehran: Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1381Sh/[2002–2003]), 1:17, 20.

consider the propositions 'The body is blue' and 'The body is contingent' to explain the difference between them. In the first proposition, the predicate-term 'blue' is something that is added to the referent of the subject-term in extramental reality; thinking of the subject-term on its own (i.e. body *qua* body) will not give the mind the concept of blueness. 'Blue' is thus an added property or predicate of 'body', without the addition of which the proposition 'The body is blue' would be false. By contrast, if we consider the statement 'The body is contingent', the predicate-term 'contingent' does not refer to a property or quality that is *added* to the referent of the subject-term. Rather, by contemplating the nature of the subject-term the mind itself extrapolates the notion of contingency from it without anything being added to the subject in actual reality. The difference between these predicates can therefore be explained in terms of whether or not the rational faculty can extrapolate the notion of the predicate from the subject itself without recourse to any non-rational processes such as perception or experimentation. For example, in the case of bodies, the rational faculty can itself deduce that whatever is a body must have extension, and whatever has extension must have parts, and whatever has parts must be composed, and whatever is composed must be contingent, and hence the contingency of bodies can be known *a priori*. For Islamic philosophers, this implies that no quality or property has been added to bodies extramentally in order for them to be contingent: one can know that bodies are contingent by simply 'considering' (*iʿtibār*) the concept of a body on its own. By contrast one cannot derive the notion of blueness from the mere thought or conceptualisation of body *qua* body. One verifies the statement 'The body is blue' through experience, which implies that something must have been added to a body extramentally in order for it to be blue. Since blueness cannot be deduced from body itself, and given that a predicate like 'blue' is a real as opposed to *iʿtibārī* predicate, it must be an accident that requires a cause for its predication. We can therefore conclude that the principle 'All accidental predicates must be caused' (*kullu ʿaraḍī maʿlūl*) only applies to those predicates that have been added to a subject extramentally but not to *iʿtibārī* predicates extracted from their subjects in the mind. The principle '*kullu ʿaraḍī maʿlūl*' thus applies to accidentals that are *al-maḥmūl bi-l-ḍamīma* but not to those that are *al-khārij al-maḥmūl*.

In the context of Ibn Kammūna's argument against divine unity, then, the implications of this are as follows. Since the notion of each divine ipseity being 'necessarily existent' is *iʿtibārī*, the accidental nature of this necessity does not mean that necessity is an accident in the same way that a real predicate like 'blue' is an accident in the extramental world. The reason is that necessity is now taken to be a predicate extrapolated from—as opposed to a predicate added to—the very essence of each divine ipseity. Necessity is an accidental predicate that is *al-khārij al-maḥmūl* and not *al-maḥmūl bi-l-ḍamīma*, and

therefore not subject to the principle that 'all accidentals are caused'.[63] This implies that even though the necessity of each divine ipseity is something accidental, it is not caused in the robust metaphysical sense of efficient causation outside the mind. Ibn Kammūna thus appears to have found a workaround for each of the potential pitfalls of Avicenna's argument against divine multiplicity by showing that there can be two or more Necessary Beings that have nothing in common other than the mere label 'being necessarily existent' which is extrapolated from their simple essences by an act of intellectual appraisal. As such, two or more Necessary Beings could potentially coexist alongside each other without either of them being composed or their individuations being caused. Avicenna's so-called *burhān* for the unity of the Necessary Being is therefore shown to be inconclusive.

3. Mullā Ṣadrā and His Commentators on the *Shubha* of Ibn Kammūna

In the remaining sections of this paper, I examine the ideas of the 17th-century Safavid philosopher Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1045 or 1050/1635 or 1640), commonly known as Mullā Ṣadrā, as well as the philosophers who carried forward his school of thought from the Qajar period to the present day. I discuss Ṣadrā's engagement with the *shubha* of Ibn Kammūna and examine the ways in which he sought to resuscitate Avicenna's proof of the unity of the Necessary Being. I then explore what I consider to be the 'missing gap' in Avicenna's argument for divine unity, at least from a Ṣadrian perspective—namely, the doctrine of divine perfection (DDP) and its importance as a crucial device in understanding the concept of necessary existence. Finally, I analyse some of Ṣadrā's own proofs for the unity of the Necessary Being which are grounded in the principles of perfect being theology to highlight the depth and originality of his contributions to Islamic debates surrounding God's uniqueness.

Mullā Ṣadrā's responses to Ibn Kammūna's *shubha* appear across a wide range of texts, each offering a different perspective on the problem.[64] Some of these responses

63 Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Manẓūma*, 1:447.

64 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya fī l-asfār al-arbaʿa*, ed. Aḥmad Aḥmadī (Tehran: Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1380Sh/[2001]), 6:52–58; cf. idem., *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya fī l-manāhij al-sulūkiyya*, ed. Sayyid Muṣṭafā Muḥaqqiq Dāmād (Tehran: Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1382Sh/[2003]), 50-1; idem., *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād fī l-ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 1:85–91; idem., *Sharḥ u taʿlīqah-i Ṣadr al-Mutaʾallihīn bar Ilāhiyyāt-i Shifāʾ*, ed. Najafqulī Ḥabībī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1382Sh/[2003]), 1:159–180; idem., *Asrār al-āyāt wa-anwār al-bayyināt*, edited by Muḥammad ʿAlī Jāwidān (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1389Sh/[2010]), 57–60; idem., *al-Maẓāhir al-ilāhiyya fī l-ʿulūm al-kamāliyya*, ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Khāmanāʾī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1391Sh/[2012]), 28–34; idem, *Sharḥ al-Hidāya al-Athīriyya*, ed. Maqṣūd Muḥammadī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1393Sh/[2014]), 2:150–56; idem., *al-Ḥikmat al-ʿarshiyya*, ed. Aṣghar Dādbih, in *Majmūʿah-i rasāʾil-i falsafī*, 4:50–1 (Tehran: Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1391Sh/[2012]); idem., *al-Masāʾil al-qudsiyya*, ed. Manūchahr Ṣadūqī Sahā, in *Majmūʿah-i rasāʾil-i falsafī* (Tehran: Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1391Sh/[2012]), 4: 246–48; idem., *al-Mashāʿir*, ed. Maqṣūd Muḥammadī, in *Majmūʿah-i rasāʾil-i falsafī* (Tehran: Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1391Sh/[2012]), 4:385–6.

are rooted in Ṣadrā's own metaphysical commitments, while others draw from more conventional Avicennian foundations. The *Asfār* addresses the problem using the former approach, which explains why Ṣadrā is quick to identify the primary reason why thinkers in the post-Avicennian tradition struggled to provide an adequate refutation of Ibn Kammūna's counterargument. He begins his response by asserting that the problem is particularly acute because of the fact that many of Avicenna's later followers characterise existence (*wujūd*) as a kind of empty concept devoid of extramental reference. As Ṣadrā explains,

> This doubt presents itself with great difficulty for those later scholars who say that existence is a term that lacks reference [in extramental reality] and is just a mental consideration. This is because, in their view, the only thing that existent things [*qua* existent things] share in common is this generic extrapolated notion. This shared existence does not, in their view, have a real instantiation, neither in God the Necessary Being nor in anything contingent. Their use of the expression 'individual existence' for the Necessary Being is just technical jargon since by using this phrase they refer to something unknown.[65]

Ṣadrā begins his engagement with Ibn Kammūna's argument against *tawḥīd* by admitting that it presents a significant and genuine problem for those holding the view that existence is *iʿtibārī*. But the problem doesn't stop just there. Indeed, according to Ṣadrā, assigning an *iʿtibārī* status to existence (and as a corollary to necessity) not only impacts philosophical arguments that aspire to prove the unity of the Necessary Being but also their ability to demonstrate that such a being even exists. This is explained in Ṣadrā's *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād* in which the discussion focusses on the very notion of what it means to be necessarily existent (*wājib al-wujūd*). The idea that there is something 'necessarily existent' can be interpreted in one of two ways: (1) that there is something that *has* the necessity of existence, but which in and of itself is something else, or (2) that something *is* the necessity of existence *per se*.[66] An analogy helps clarify what is meant here. 'Being white', for example, can either be a property of something which in itself is not white (such as a piece of cloth), or it can be a semantic description or label of the colour white itself. In other words, according to Ṣadrā, the ascription 'necessarily existent' can either be used as a description of the very essence of that which it names or as a description of something whose essence is something other than 'necessary existence' but which nevertheless has the necessity of existence, the latter of these being the

65 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:54.

66 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, 1:83. In other words, there are two kinds of necessary being: (1) necessary due to itself (*al-wājib bi-l-dhāt*) and (2) necessary due to another (*al-wājib bi-l-ghayr*). A necessary being in the former sense *is* the necessity of existence, while a being in the latter sense *has* the necessity of existence. Cf. Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ al-Ḥidāya*, 2:152.

view of Ibn Kammūna.[67] From a metaphysical point of view, then, the expression 'being necessarily existent' used for beings of the former kind does not require any cause or qualification just as the predicate 'white' used for the colour white itself does not need anything beyond the subject itself, being as it were a kind of tautology.[68] However, its application to beings of the second kind does, implying that the validity of the predicate 'necessarily existent' for such beings is grounded in the fact that some property has been added to or extrapolated from them.[69] For this reason, Ṣadrā explains that

> Any necessary existent that is not identical to necessary existence itself, but is something that possesses a reality or essence [other than necessary existence] and that this essence is what is then attributed with being necessarily existent, such a thing requires for its being attributed with necessary existence the accidental occurrence of this meaning (*amr*) and therefore a *cause* to make it be this way or to make it *per se*, so that it then may be attributed with this property, depending on which of the two opinions one takes on this issue.[70] Regardless, the thing itself is merely contingent, and it is only on account of that property that it becomes something necessarily existent. Whatever is like this cannot be necessarily existent due to itself.

67 Recall that according to Ibn Kammūna, the essence of each Necessary Being is unknown (*majhūl al-kunh*). Hence, each so-called 'Necessary Being' has an essence to which the necessity of existence is asribed, but which in itself is not the necessity of existence. As for what that 'Necessary Being' might be in itself, this is unknown.

68 In such cases, if *a*'s F-ness is because of *a* itself, then F is an essential property of *a*. Therefore, the statement '*a* is F' is essentially true. Hence, if N is a necessary being and its necessary existence is due to it being N, then N is a necessary being due to itself. But if N's necessary existence is not due to N itself, then N's necessary existence is due to something else. In this case, N is not necessary existence *per se*, but rather has the necessity of existence.

69 There exists, in other words, a *ḥaythiyya taʿlīliyya* —an intermediary causal explanation—for the notion of 'necessary existence' which makes it a predicate of beings in the second category, but no such *ḥaythiyya* for beings in the first category. To explain what is meant here consider a proposition of the kind 'S is P'. If P is true of S *insofar as S is S and only S*, then there is no further cause or justification needed for the predication of P for S. An example would be 'X is a human, and X is rational', for the rationality of human beings is true by definition and not because of something else besides being a human. By contrast, when S *qua* S is not sufficient for it having the predicate P, then there must be some cause or justification for the predication of the predicate term of the subject term. The statement, 'X is a human being, and X is a philosopher' can only be true if there is a cause or good reason for X's being a philosopher, for the mere fact that X is a human being does not suffice for X to be a philosopher. In this case, there has to be a *ḥaythiyya taʿlīliyya*, 'an aspect of causation', that justifies X's being a philosopher. In the context of our discussion, the predicate 'necessarily existent' in 'X is necessarily existent' can be interpreted in two ways, either as a predicate of X that requires a *ḥaythiyya taʿlīliyya* or not. In the former case, X cannot be necessarily existent due to itself, for its being necessarily existent is *due to a cause*. In the latter case, X's being necessarily existent has no cause, and the reason why this is so is because X is 'the necessity of existence' *per se* in the same manner, loosely speaking, that white *per se* is white.

70 The controversy that Mullā Ṣadrā is referring to is the problem of instauration (*jaʿl*) which asks whether it is the existence of things or their quiddities that is made when things are caused to be. For Ṣadrā, the existence of things is what is instaurated *per se* (*majʿūl bi-l-dhāt*) by the efficient cause, not their quiddities. The efficient cause of a human being in other words does not make a human a human, but rather it makes it an existent human.

> Hence, every necessarily existent thing due to itself is necessarily existent in itself.[71]

However, both existence and its necessity are *iʿtibārī* according to Ibn Kammūna and other so-called 'Illuminationist' philosophers. The implication from a Ṣadrian perspective is that each so-called 'Necessary Being' is therefore just some unknown essence that *has* the necessity of existence but which in and of itself is neither existence nor necessity. But if the necessity of existence is not itself the essence of the Necessary Being then its being necessarily existent requires a cause, and that entails that what is initially presumed to be a Necessary Being is in fact just a contingent being. Hence, there are no beings that are truly necessary of existence due to themselves if existence and necessity are *iʿtibārī*.

For these reasons, Ṣadrā believed that any attempts to refute Ibn Kammūna's counterargument based on similar metaphysical presumptions about the nature of *wujūd* were bound to fail, and it is not suprising that his discussion immediately turns on the assumption that existence is *iʿtibārī*.

> As for the truth of the matter verified by us, namely, that this extrapolated notion [i.e. existence] has real instances [outside the mind] and that its relation to them is akin to the relation the general accident has to its individuals and species, then the objection is not so strong. Rather, it can be deflected with the least amount of reflection since this notion, notwithstanding the fact that it is something extrapolated from quiddity due to an accidental cause, is nonetheless a meaning extrapolated from a real instance of every individual existence *qua* its essence due to itself. Therefore, its relation to the particular existence possessed by each individual being is the same as the relation that infinitive nouns have to their quiddities—such as the meaning 'humanity' which is extropolated from each human being or 'animality' extrapolated from every animal. All of these are shared as meanings which are subsequent to the fact that they have something in common [in extramental reality] from which their meanings can be expolated.[72]

Ṣadrā's emphasis here is that the concept of being (*mafhūm al-wujūd*) is in some sense grounded in the extramental things that instantiate it just as the concepts 'humanity' and 'animality' are gounded in the essence of individual humans and animals. Being has a reality (*ḥaqīqa*) outside the mind and is not just some concept our minds conjure up without anything running parallel to it in extramental reality. One proof of this is that the concept of being cannot be derived from quiddities *qua* quiddities: the idea of a horse, for example, cannot give to the mind the concept of being *per se* since no quiddity has the meaning of *wujūd* included within itself. Rather it is the *existence* of the horse that

71 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, 1:85–86; cf. idem., *Sharḥ al-Hidāya*, 2:152.

72 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:54.

allows the mind to abstract and formulate a general concept of *wujūd*, but this is only possible if individual existences are real.

Therefore, if Ṣadrā's claim is true and the reason why Ibn Kammūna's *shubha* poses a genuine threat to Avicenna's argument for divine unity is because it assumes that being (*wujūd*) is merely an abstract concept that has no real ontological status in extramental reality, then it is because of this very assumption that subsequent thinkers too have failed to adequately respond to the challenge of Ibn Kammūna's counterargument. For Ṣadrā, there is no adequate way of responding to the *shubha* of Ibn Kammūna without first denying the very premise on which it is built. What this means in effect is that the only way of proving the *tawḥīd* of the Necessary Being is by first commiting to the doctrine that being itself is something real (*ʿayniyyat al-wujūd*) and that this reality is what grounds the perfections of all existent things (i.e. *aṣālat al-wujūd*). Therefore, whatever perfections an existent thing has, it derives these from its *wujūd* and not from its *māhiyya*.

Ṣadrā's proof of divine unity in the *Asfār* therefore begins with him first affirming the reality of *wujūd* itself *pace* Illuminationist thinkers like Ibn Kammūna. By doing this he removes the basic premise on which Ibn Kammūna's argument against divine unity is constructed: *wujūd* has a *ḥaqīqa* and is not merely *iʿtibārī*. From Ṣadrā's perspective, the *shubha* of Ibn Kammūna is a basic non-starter. It begins with a false premise (i.e. *iʿtibāriyyat al-wujūd* and *aṣālat al-māhiyya*) and therefore ends in a false conclusion (i.e. multiplicity of Necessary Beings, *taʿaddud wājib al-wujūd*). Avicenna's argument for divine unity thus remains intact and immune from Ibn Kammūna's counterargument on the proviso that one reads into it the Ṣadrian notion of being's ontological primacy (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). This understanding about the nature and existence of *wujūd* is thus incorporated by Ṣadrā as an explicit premise within formal argument of the Necessary Being's unity:

> Therefore, if in existence there are two Necessary Beings whose necessity is due to themselves, then [the notion of] existence that is extrapolated from them would be a shared meaning as admitted by the opponent also. But this implies that the real existence that runs parallel to this notion and which happens to be the principle for the extrapolation of [each being's] existence-status is also shared in some respect. Hence, each Necessary Being's distinction from the other must be due to something essential, for whenever the aspect from which two things happen to agree is something essential, then the aspect from which they are different—that is, each being's individuation—must also be something essential. However, the result of this would be that the essence of neither Necessary Being is simple; and being composed—as is known—negates necessity.[73]

73 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:55.

The crucial point here is that the both the notion of existence (*mafhūm al-wujūd*) and the notion of necessity (*mafhūm al-wujūb*) are not just some mind-conjured notions that have no ontological footing in being itself. Ṣadrā's emphasis is that what the mind grasps through notions such as *wujūd* and *wujūb* are not mere fabrications of the mind, but extrapolations of meanings from things that have extramental existence. Running parallel to each person's mental conceptualisation of the meaning of existence—the existence that Ṣadrā here refers to as 'extrapolated existence' (*al-wujūd al-intizāʿī*)—is a real instantiation of existence itself (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqīqī*). Both 'existence' and 'necessity' are referring terms. Without this real instance of existence there would be no extrapolated notion of existence. In other words, as Ṣadrā explains, the real instantiations of existence are principles that give rise to the extrapolated notion of existence; they are the '*mabdaʾ intizāʿi al-mawjudiyya al-maṣdariyya*', the ontological counterparts of our notion of being as an infinitive noun. The concept of being thus follows from the fact that being itself is an actualised reality, albeit that what is conceived (*mafhūm*) differs from its extramental reality in the same way that a verbal noun or infinitive (*maṣdar*) like 'humanity' differs from the extramental instances of 'human'.[74] The concept of being as a *maṣdar* is therefore something 'extrapolated from' the external things that instantiate it just as Ibn Kammūna believed, but unlike Ibn Kammūna what it is extrapolated from is none other than the reality of each thing's *wujūd* as opposed to their *māhiyya*, since no quiddity *qua* itself is capable of purveying the notion of existence. It is for this reason that Avicenna's argument for divine unity stands according to Mullā Ṣadrā.

In that scenario, then, where there are two Necessary Beings, the mind extrapolates a single notion of existence and a single notion of necessity which it then predicates of both entities. This means that *wujūd* and *wujūb* are not equivocal notions, but have a single meaning shared by two Necessary Beings. This implies that each Necessary Being has a real instantiation of *wujūd* running parallel to our understanding of it as a concept, an extramental counterpart which must also be shared in some sense. The analogy here is similar to that of any other infinitive noun: although Zayd and ʿAmr have different instances of humanity extramentally (they are extensionally different), they are nonetheless the same essentially (they are intensionally the same). And just as each instance of humanity in Zayd and ʿAmr cannot differentiate them from each other, so too in the case of two Necessary Beings that participate in a real instantiation of necessary existence: their existences do not and cannot individuate them as particular beings and hence they cannot be differentiated from each other through existence alone. Given that in Ṣadrā's

74 Ṣadrā draws on the linguistic relationship between infinitives and their corresponding concrete nouns to illustrate how the concept of *wujūd* ought to be related to its extramental instances. For example, just as Zayd's being a human (*insān*) is due to the fact that he possesses 'humanity' (*insāniyya*), so too is this *mawjūd*'s being a *mawjūd* due to the fact that it possesses *wujūd*. Therefore, in the same way that there would be no 'humans' if 'humanity' did not exist, likewise there would be nothing *mawjūd* if *wujūd* itself did not exist.

metaphysics each Necessary Being is just being in its purest and most intense form, the 'essence' of each Necessary Being is just existence itself. Existence is thus essential to each Necessary Being. But if there are two Necessary Beings that each have existence as their essence, then there are only two possibilities: either (1) they are not really two individual beings but in fact just one and the same, or (2) they are really distinct from each other and differentiated by some other part within their essence, which implies that they are not simple beings. However, any kind of mereological distinction within the essence of either Necessary Being implies that it is composed and in fact not necessary of existence due to itself. Therefore, there can be only one Necessary Being—*tawḥīd*.

Ṣadrā's proof of divine unity undercuts the *shubha* of Ibn Kammūna and substitutes what it considers to be the false premises on which it is built with the correct premises from a Ṣadrian point of view. Ibn Kammūna assumed that two Necessary Beings could co-exist if they had unique but unknowable essences other than existence. From Ṣadrā's perspective, this is precisely where the argument fails: it prioritises essence over existence and subsequently demotes *wujūd* to a non-instantiated mind-constructed phenomenon with no actual footing in extramental reality. Ṣadrā's argument by contrast begins with *wujūd* as the primary ontic reality and from there proceeds to demonstrate that there cannot be two *wujūd*s that are both essentially necessary. It is a simple and efficient argument that avoids the initial trappings of the objections raised by Ibn Kammūna.

The above argument has the imprint of Ṣadrā's own philosophical commitments and is based on the assertion that existence is a concrete, mind-independent reality, which is a claim rejected by so-called Illuminationists. The dispute here focuses on the nature of existence itself and less on the formal structure of Ibn Kammūna's counterargument. But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that we do not concede to Ṣadrā's belief that existence is a single modulated reality (*ḥaqīqa wāḥida mushakkika*) and argue along the lines of the Illuminationists' philosophy and demarcate existence as a purely mental notion. In that case, Ṣadrā highlights another problematic feature of Ibn Kammūna's counterargument which does not require a commitment to his own doctrine of *aṣālat al-wujūd*; and that is that while he may disagree with the Illuminationists on whether or not existence has extramental reference, both he and they agree that the notion of being (*mafhūm al-wujūd*) is a *single* concept in the mind.[75] But a single notion such as existence can only be a shared notion if the things from which it is extrapolated have something in common. However, this is explicitly not the case in the *shubha* of Ibn Kammūna, and the question arises as to how it is possible to extrapolate and predicate a single notion of existence/necessity when each Necessary Being has a unique essence that shares nothing in common with the essence of the other Necessary Beings. How can any singular notion be derived from the many *qua* many?

75 That is, the concept of being is monosemic (*mushtarak maʿnawī*).

Ṣadrā expresses this concern in several works. In the *Asfār*, he writes as follows:

> Therefore, it is self-evident that a single infinitive meaning cannot be predicated of disparate essences *qua* disparate essences without there being an aspect of unity between them. Hence it follows on the basis of the aforementioned assumption [i.e. the notion of existence being a single notion] that two Necessary Beings must agree in some intrinsic property not lying outside of their essences. However, an agreement in something essential necessitates that differentiation and multiplication are the result of an aspect within the essence also—such as a specific difference when they have a genus in common, or individuating properties when they share the same species. However, the result in each case is composition [within the divine essence] and that negates the essential necessity [of each Necessary Being].[76]

This is a criticism that Illuminationist philosophers must respond to. From Ṣadrā's perspective, it is simply impossible to derive a single unified notion from the many *qua* many, and thus a further nail in the coffin from his perspective for Ibn Kammūna's hypothetical argument against God's uniqueness.[77] Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, the chief commentator and propagator of Ṣadrā's ideas in Qajar Iran, went a step further by arguing that it was not just the Illuminationists but other 'Peripatetics' too who are confronted with the same objection.[78] The reason, he explains, is that although *mashāʾī* philosophers like Avicenna believe in *wujūd* having real ontological presence outside the mind, they nonetheless deny the claim that existence is a single reality extramentally. The Peripatetics reject the notion of an underlying unity among ontologically subsistent existences. Sabzawārī argues that this position creates a dilemma within the Peripatetic tradition. If all extramental existences are essentially distinct—a claim he attributes to the Peripatetic school given their metaphysical stance that each instance of being (*wujūd*) is 'entirely distinct' (*ḥaqāʾiq mutabāyina bi-tamām al-dhāt*) from all others[79]—then it should not be possible to conceive of a single, unified notion of *wujūd*, as the Peripatetics themselves purportedly maintain.[80] In other words, if each instance of *wujūd* has nothing in common with any other instance outside the mind, then the concept (*mafhūm*) of *wujūd* must be equivocal. This follows from the principle that when two things share nothing in common, there is

76 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:56; cf. idem., *Sharḥ al-Ḥidāya*, 2:153; idem., *Sharḥ u taʿlīqah-i Ṣadr al-Mutaʾallihīn bar Ilāhiyyāt-i Shifāʾ*, 1:170.

77 Cf. Mullā Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Iṣfahānī 'Wāḥid al-ʿAyn' (d. ca. 1242/1826), *Sharḥ al-Ḥikmat al-ʿarshiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Masʿūd Khudāwardī (Tehran: Muʾassasah-i Pazhūhashī Ḥikmat u Falsafah-i Īrān, 1391Sh/[2012–2013]), 440.

78 See Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *taʿlīqa* no. 89 in Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:472–73.

79 See Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Manẓūma*, 1:207–10.

80 See Ḥasan Ḥasanzādah Āmulī, *Waḥdat az dīdghāh-i ʿārif u ḥakīm* (Qom: Alif Lām Mīm, 1383Sh/[2004–2005]), 64–5.

no justification for predicating a single notion of both.[81]

If this is indeed the case, then Ibn Kammūna's well-known objection appears to present a genuine problem: two Necessary Beings having nothing in common would each give rise to an equivocal notion of being 'necessarily existent,' which is merely a name they have in common rather than a unified concept. Consequently, if the notion of each Necessary Being's existence is equivocal then there is no *jihat al-ittifāq* (basis for agreement) between them, and thus no need for a *jihat al-iftirāq* (basis for differentiation) beyond their already distinct essences. As a result there would be no logical obstacle preventing the simultaneous existence of multiple Necessary Beings.[82] The necessity of existence is not, in the strict sense, then, a common accident (*ʿaraḍ ʿāmm*), and hence does not require a cause contrary to Avicenna's concerns. So, even within the Peripatetic framework, Sabzawārī contends that the existence of multiple Necessary Beings does not necessarily entail composition or causation. The Peripatetics therefore cannot demonstrate God's uniqueness in the face of Ibn Kammūna's counterargument.

Sabzawārī's provocation sparked outrage among later proponents of Avicenna's philosophy. For thinkers in the Ṣadrian tradition, however, there was widespread support for Sabzawārī's claim that it is impossible to extrapolate or derive a single meaning from diverse things whose realities are entirely distinct or which have no accidental properties or features in common.[83] In their view, it is simply not possible to derive a singular meaning from diverse things *qua* diverse things.[84] A uniform concept can only be derived

81 See Ḥasan Ḥasanzādah Āmulī, *Wahdat az dīdghāh-i ʿārif u ḥakīm*, 68–72.

82 As Sabzawārī states, there is a single 'label' (*ʿunwān*) called 'Necessary Being' for each so-called Necessary Being, but in reality what is being referred to by that label, i.e. the *muʿanwan*, is entirely different and distinct in each case. This is precisely the reason why in Ibn Kammūna's *shubha* each so-called 'Necessary Being' is referred to as *mahjūl al-kunh*, 'unknown in essence'. Because although they share the label 'necessary of existence due to themselves', this is not their essence; it is merely a label (*ʿunwān*) for things whose essences in actual fact are unknown and dissimilar in every instance. See Sabzawārī, *taʿlīqa* no. 89 in Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:472.

83 See, for example, Muḥammad Riḍā Qumshaʾī's *Risāla fī radd jawāz intizāʿ mafhūm wāḥid min al-ḥaqāʾiq al-mutabāyina*, in Ḥāmid Nājī Iṣfahānī (ed.), *Majmūʿah-i aṡār-i ḥakīm-i ṣuhbā: ʿārif ilāhī Āqā Muḥammad Riḍā Qumshaʾī* (Tehran: Qānūn Pazhūhash, 1378Sh/[1999–2000]), 245–52. Abū l-Ḥasan Jilvah, who was a staunch Avicennian and opposed Ṣadrā's philosophy, tried to rebut Sabzawārī's claims in his *Risāla fī anna mahfūm al-wāḥid kayfa yuntazaʿ min al-ḥaqāʾiq al-mutabāyina*, in Ḥasan Riḍā Zadah (ed.), *Majmūʿah-i āṡār-i Ḥakīm Jilvah* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat, 1385Sh/[2006–2007]), 605–8. The question has been discussed extensively in a variety of philosophical contexts by thinkers in the modern era; see, for example, al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Nihāyat al-ḥikma*, ed. ʿAbbās ʿAlī al-Zāriʿī al-Sabzawārī (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1426/[2005–2006]), 1:33–34.

84 While there is an almost unanimous agreement that things insofar as they are different cannot produce a common notion predicable of them, there is a significant difference of opinion on the converse proposition as to whether or not it is possible to predicate diverse meanings of a reality whose essence is simple and has no composition or multiplicity whatsoever. On this particular aspect of the debate and its relevance to the discussion of God's attributes, see Rūḥullāh Farūghī, 'Arziyābī pāsikh-hā-yi falāsifah u ʿurafā bih ishkāl-i nāsāzghārī-yi taʿaddud-i ṣifāt-i khudāvand u waḥdat-i dhāt', *Ilāhiyāt u falsafah-i muʿāṣir*, 1, no. 1 (2021): 234–46.

when things have some degree of 'overlap'.[85] According to Sabzawārī, the only solution to the problem is to revert to the Ṣadrian intuition that existence is a single modulated reality that is, by its very essence, the cause of all unity and multiplicity, a unity-in-multiplicity and multiplicity-in-unity. 'As for the victorious *madhhab*', boasts Sabzawārī, 'in which existence is primary (*aṣīl*) and a label (*ʿunwān*) for a simple luminous reality that is modulated through an acute sense of modulation (*al-tashkīk al-khāṣṣī*),[86] whose relation to that reality is akin to the relation of the essential to its subject, or a concept (*mafhūm*) to its actual instance [outside of the mind]—and not akin to the relation that an extrapolated concept (*al-mafhūm al-intizāʿī*) has to its source—then [the objection in Ibn Kammūna's *shubha*] is easily deflected […]'.[87]

There are other potential pitfalls and criticisms, however. All of the arguments presented so far assume that the principle of each Necessary Being's individuation is distinct from what unites them as Necessary Beings.[88] But one may question why this is so given that according to Ṣadrā's own metaphysics, existence is both the principle of unity and difference. This of course invokes an idea inherent to Ṣadrā's philosophy known as the modulation of being (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) and is something which Ṣadrā himself believed is necessary to properly grasp the relation between the one and the many. It is thus an objection made from within the Ṣadrian system itself. A possible criticism here would be that if existence itself is both what unites and distinguishes things, then is it not conceivable for there to be multiple Necessary Beings? One could argue that among them,

85 See Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Manẓūma*, 1:447.

86 The expression 'acute sense of modulation' (*al-tashkīk al-khāṣṣī*) refers to the idea that the reality of being is modulated through different degrees of intensification and debilitation. This is a crucial aspect of Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics according to which being (*wujūd*) itself is what unites and differentiates different levels of existence just as the essence of light itself is what differentiates different intensities and hues of light. The implications of this are profound and far-reaching: there is only one true existence, which manifests itself in different orders of hierarchy, some more intense than others, yet not distinct at root from existence itself. As Sabzawārī, *Taʿlīqāt ʿalā l-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Taʾrīkh al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 395–96 remarks, existence being modulated in the acute sense (*al-tashkīk al-khāṣṣī*) means that 'prior and posterior levels of existence are not separated through detachment (*baynūna ʿuzliyya*)', but rather that each level of existence is just the same as the others at root except that each level has more or less existential perfections than the others. It is crucial to note the language here; the expression '*baynūna ʿizliyya*' is a direct reference to the words of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the first Shīʿī Imam, who in some of the sermons attributed to him is reported as saying that 'declaring God's unity (*tawḥīd*) is to differentiate Him from his creation, such that His distinction from them is like that of how an attribute is separate [from what is attributed] and not that He is separated from them by detachment' (*wa-tawḥīduhu tamyīzuhu min khalqihi wa-ḥukm al-tamyīz baynūnatu ṣifatin lā baynūnatu ʿizlatin*). See Abū Manṣūr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Tabrasī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Bahādurī and Muḥammad Hādī Bih (Qom: Intishārāt-i Uswa, 1413/[1992]), 1:475; cf. Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Sayyid Hāshim al-Ḥusaynī al-Tihrānī (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1430/[2009]), 43 where in the course of a long sermon the Imam is reported as saying, 'He does not inhere in His creation that it may be said "He is among them," nor is He removed from it that it may be said, "He is separate [from His creation]".'

87 Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *taʿlīqa* no. 89 in Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:473; cf. idem., *Sharḥ al-Manẓūma*, 1:446–47 fn. 3.

88 That is, they assume that the '*mā bihi al-ifitirāq*' is different from the '*mā bihi l-ishtirāk*'.

one possesses a more intense and perfect degree of existence, distinguishing it from others whose existences are comparatively weaker and less perfect. This does not raise concerns about existence being composite, since variations in intensity do not add to or subtract from existence itself. Nevertheless, a distinction remains between what is more intense and what is less intense in relation to existence. Thus, even within Ṣadrā's own metaphysical framework, the possibility of multiple Necessary Beings seems justifiable.

Ṣadrā's response and subsequent discussion of this problem brings into sharper focus some of the most salient aspects of his metaphysics. His responses shed important light on how he understood the nature of existence and its necessity as being intricately woven with the idea of perfection; how that which exists necessarily due to itself must be understood and equated with a being that is not only perfect but maximally perfect.[89] The idea of perfection thus becomes a crucial link in Ṣadrā's metaphysics. It ties together concepts such as existence, necessity and unity, and as such serves to fill a missing gap in Avicenna's arguments for God's uniqueness by giving greater prominence to an idea that seems to have less emphasis and importance in Avicenna's own metaphysics. Ṣadrā responds to the objection as follows:

> This [objection] is deflected based on what we have alluded to previously: that any kind of defeciency [in a thing] entails [that thing] being caused. This is because it is not possible for the nature of existence *qua* existence to have any deficiency without a cause, since the meaning of 'being deficient' is not the same as the meaning of 'existence'. Deficiency is a privation, and nothing can necessitate its own privation. This is not the case with perfection, since a thing's perfection is its assuredness for it.[90]

What this passage highlights is that inasmuch as existence is just existence it is absolute perfection. For this reason, the nature of existence cannot have any deficiency, because any kind of deficiency would be tantamount to a privation (*ʿadam*). But there is by definition no *ʿadam* in being *qua* being. Therefore, if an existence is deficient, then this cannot be due to an intrinsic privation since *ʿadam* is not an inherent property of *wujūd* but rather its opposite. Any limitation or curtailment of being must therefore result from an external factor imposing a restriction from without on the nature of *wujūd* itself.[91]

89 On perfect being theology, see the excellent study by Yujin Nagasawa, *Maximal God: A New Defence of Perfect Being Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

90 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:55.

91 Ṣadrā provides a useful analogy here. Imagine two lines, one of which is longer than the other. Whilst it is true that the perfection of the longer line lies in the fact that it is a line, it is not correct to say that the imperfection of the shorter line is due to its being a line only. In other words, it is not because of the nature it possesses as a line that it is deficient. Its deficiency comes from the fact that its length has been curtailed and limited, but this does not come from lineness *qua* lineness. According to Sadra, this means that if there is an infinite line, then there is nothing present other than lineness itself, whereas

This means that a 'Necessary Being' that is less than perfect (or less perfect than another) cannot be sheer existence, but a less than infinite existence that is limited by a privation caused by something other than existence itself. It would thus be a combination of being and non-being and hence a contingent being.[92] In Ṣadrā's metaphysics, pure being—existence entirely free from any association with non-being[93]—is inseparably linked to ultimate perfection. Every maximally perfect being is pure existence, and every pure existence is maximally perfect. The Necessary Being is therefore existence in its most intensified form (*muta'akkid al-wujūd*), a being that Ṣadrā himself describes as 'that greater than which nothing more perfect can be conceived' (*wa-lā yutaṣawwar mā huwa atamm minhu*).[94] In contrast, a contingent being is any entity that is not maximally perfect and therefore not pure existence, but is rather a being whose essence in tinged with non-being.[95] Its contingency arises from its inherent deficiency, and because it is contingent it must necessarily be caused. The highest intensity of existence corresponds to infinite existence, therefore, and consequently whatever is necessarily existent by itself must be entirely devoid of imperfections since it is the deprivation of being (i.e. the lack of existential perfections) that renders entities finite.[96] Therefore, if a so-called 'Necessary Being' were in any way less than absolutely perfect, it would be contingent and thus subject to causation—rendering it finite. The conclusion, then, is that there can be only one ultimately perfect being, and thus only one true Necessary Being.[97] Ṣadrā summarises these points as follows:

> Therefore, every existence of finite intensity must have a cause other than its own individual existence that limits [its intensity], and it is that cause that specifies and individuates a particular rank [for it] within the nature of existence. However, being-caused negates the necessity of existence; i.e. it negates a thing being exist-

in the case of a finite line there is not only lineness itself but something else besides lineness, namely a limit or terminus that constrains the line from being only a line—that is, an infinite line. See Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-muta'āliyya*, 6:55.

92 In the Ṣadrian framework, possessing a quiddity is tantamount to an ontological privation, metaphysically speaking; for quiddity itself is defined as the 'limitation of being' (*ḥadd al-wujūd*), and any limit is a privation of sorts (*amr 'adamī*). Therefore, every contingent being the essence of which is not identical to its existence (*wujūd*) possesses *wujūd* in a limited sense, and thus comprises both *wujūd* and its limitation which is a privation (*'adam*). For Ṣadrā, the combination of *wujūd* and *'adam* is itself a kind of composition (*tarkīb*), therefore, and in the Ṣadrian tradition is depicted as 'the most detestable form of compositionality' (*sharr al-tarākīb*). See Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *ḥāshiya* no. 146 in Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-muta'āliyya*, 1:565.

93 Whatever has no association with non-being must therefore be a Necessary Being.

94 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-muta'āliyya*, 6:16.

95 All contingent beings possess a quiddity. No quiddity is existence. Hence, the essence of every contingent being is characterised by non-*wujūd*.

96 For this reason, the Necessary Being cannot have a *māhiyya* because a *māhiyya* is something other than *wujūd* (e.g. 'human' is other than 'existence'), and whatever is other than *wujūd* is by definition non-*wujūd*, i.e. non-being (*'adam*).

97 See Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-asmā'*, 374.

> ent by eternal necessity. Therefore, it is impossible for there to be more than one Necessary Being. This explanation of *tawḥīd* in the manner presented here is not found in proofs of other scholars (*ahl al-iʿtibār*).[98]

One of the most profound metaphysical implications of this is that if God is maximally perfect and infinite in His existence then there is by definition no ontological scope for any other form of (necessary) existence. All of reality must therefore be occupied by the reality of the Necessary Being. If this were not the case, there would exist something not encompassed by the reality of the Necessary Being, implying that the existence of the Necessary Being is distinct from the existence of that other entity. However, this is inadmissible in Ṣadrā's system as it necessitates a limitation on the existence of the Necessary Being. As previously established, any limitation renders existence finite, caused, and contingent in essence. Such attributes are incompatible with that which possesses necessity of existence in and of itself. Consequently, the only coherent conclusion is that 'the Simple Reality is all things' (*basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa kullu l-ashyāʾ*).[99] For these reasons, there is both a logical and metaphysical impossibility in the idea of there being two or more Necessary Beings.

4. Mullā Ṣadrā on Necessity, Unity and Perfection

The notion of perfection plays a pivotal role in Ṣadrā's metaphysics.[100] I now want to consider how Ṣadrā utilises it to prove divine unity in a more principled way. More specifically, I want to show how this idea links to other crucial concepts such as necessity, simplicity and unity in Ṣadrā's thought thereby giving it an overarching importance in different parts of Ṣadrā's metaphysics.

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98 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:56.

99 I discuss this principle (which I call the Simple Reality Principle) and its far-reaching implications, as well as its reception in the Qajar period, in a forthcoming article. If God is pure being and pure being is everything, then there is no 'other'; hence there is only God—and that in the Ṣadrian framework is *tawḥīd*. The fact that God's existence—or existence *per se*—encompasses the whole of reality does not imply that His existence is akin to a universal that encompasses all its particulars. Rather, His existence encapsulates being through another sense of enompassing (*shumūl*), one that Ṣadrā himself writes is 'only known to the mystics firmly rooted in knowledge' (*al-ʿurafāʾ al-rāsikhūn fī l-ʿilm*), alluding to Q. 3:7, and which in the *ʿirfānī* tradition is referred to as the Breath of the All-Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*). See Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Mashāʿir*, 340–41.

100 Avicenna recognises perfection as a metaphysical property of the Necessary Being but he does not give it the same degree of importance as later thinkers like Suhrawardī and Ṣadrā. The historical roots of thinking about perfection as a metaphysical concept can of course be traced back to Plotinus, who conceived of the One as ἁπλῶς τέλειον (*aplôs teleion*), the Absolutely Perfect, and to Aristotle, who in *Metaphysics* XII.6–9 described the Unmoved Mover as pure actuality (ἐνέργεια)—the highest expression of perfection in the cosmos. In Avicenna's words, 'The Necessary Being is the True-Perfect (*al-kamāl al-ḥaqq*), having within itself no contingency or potentiality. In short, the Necessary Being has no privation or evil inside It; and It is the source of every perfection' (Avicenna, *al-Hidāya*, 263).

Our discussion thus far has shown that there is a linkage in Ṣadrā's thinking between a thing existing necessarily and it being maximally perfect. The Necessary Being is by Its nature a maximally perfect being—a being devoid of contingency and impossibility. Consequently, all perfections belong to the Necessary Being by necessity, without any deficiency or limitation. Since privation signifies an absence of being and the lack of a perfection, and because the Necessary Being is defined as existence in its most complete and unconditioned form (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), it must be absolutely simple—pure existence (*wujūd ṣirf*), wholly unassociated with non-being in any respect. The Necessary Being cannot therefore have any 'aspect' or 'perspective' under which it might be said to be contingent or that its relation to some perfection may be said to be impossible.[101] It is for this reason that Avicenna and later philosophers describe the Necessary Being as a being that is 'necessary in all respects'; necessary, that is, in relation to every *perfection* conceivable for It and hence a maximally perfect being.[102] Avicenna argued for this principle, which I term the 'principle of absolute necessity', by examining the alternative hypothesis and considering its implications for a Necessary Being that is not necessary in all respects. He demonstrates that if the Necessary Being had just a single aspect in which its relation to a certain perfection is merely contingent then it would fail to be self-sufficient in that regard, and anything that is not self-sufficient is by definition a contingent being. Mullā Ṣadrā advanced this line of reasoning by explaining how contingency itself is grounded in essential non-being: an entity is contingent precisely because its essence *qua* itself fails to provide sufficient grounds for its own perfections.[103] A being that is not necessary in all respects is thus a composite of being and non-being from different aspects given that a single aspect cannot account for both being and its privation.[104]

Building on these premises, Ṣadrā articulated a novel argument for divine unity grounded exclusively in the concept of maximal perfection (i.e. being absolutely necessary). He begins by positing the existence of two distinct Necessary Beings, A and B. By defi-

101 The terms 'aspect' and 'perspective' translate the Arabic word *jiha*, which is used to denote those attributes of the Necessary Being that are considered perfections for It (i.e. *al-ṣifāt al-kamāliyya*), such as knowledge, life and power. Therefore, the assertion that 'the Necessary Being is necessary in all aspects' just means that 'the Necessary Being is necessary with respect to every perfection that is conceivable for It'. See al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Nihāyat al-ḥikma*, 2:93 (fn. 1); Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, *al-Talwīḥāt al-lawḥiyya wa-l-ʿarshiyya*, ed. Najafqulī Ḥabībī (Tehran: Muʾassasah-i Pazhūhashī-yi Ḥikmat u Falsafah-i Īrān, 1388Sh/[2009–2010]), 211.

102 It is not sufficient for the Necessary Being to have a perfection to just some degree, but rather It must possess whatever perfections are conceivable for It to a *maximal* degree. A Necessary Being is thus a perfect being in the utmost sense of perfection.

103 If A is contingent with respect to *x*, then this means that A *qua* itself is not *x* and that *x* may or may not exist for A. However, this cannot be the case with respect to the Necessary Being as it woud imply that the perfection in question has no necessary or essential relation to the Necessary Being. This means that the Necessary Being *qua* itself does not have that perfection, and hence there is a privation at the level of the Necessary Being's essence. Such a being cannot be a maximally perfect being according to Ṣadrā.

104 For Mullā Ṣadrā's discussion of the principle of absolute necessity, see his *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 1:142–149; idem., *Sharḥ al-Hidāya*, 2:157–164; cf. al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Nihāyat al-ḥikma*, 1:93–7.

nition, a Necessary Being is maximally perfect, beyond which no greater perfection can be imagined or realised. Such a being possesses all perfections to their utmost degree. However, if A and B are distinct, they must be discernible realities, and since a being that is necessary of existence by itself cannot be individuated by accidental properties, their differentiation must be due to their essential properties. Yet, this leads to insurmountable contradictions. If A possesses a perfection that B lacks, then A is by definition more perfect than B, negating B's status as a maximally perfect being. Conversely, if B possesses a perfection that A lacks, then B would be superior to A, contradicting A's supposed maximal perfection. If both A and B possess perfections which the other lacks, then neither can be truly maximally perfect. In each scenario, then, Ṣadrā observes that what is purported to be a maximally perfect being is in reality less than maximally perfect, and each so-called 'Necessary Being' turns out to be comprised of both being and non-being given that each lacks a perfection which the other possesses.[105] This inherent deficiency renders the entity composite, possessing some perfections while being deprived of others. Ṣadrā terms this the composition of being and non-being (*tarkīb al-wujūd wa-l-ʿadam*), which followers of Ṣadrā's philosophy regard as the most problematic or 'evil' form of composition (*sharr al-tarākīb*). The reason is because it implies that non-being (*ʿadam*) has infiltrated into the very essence of existence (*wujūd*) itself, an impossibility for the Necessary Being whose nature must be pure undivided being (*al-wujūd al-ṣirf*). By showing that any supposed plurality of Necessary Beings results in at least one aspect of essential non-being, Ṣadrā concludes that there can be only one maximally perfect being—one Necessary Being.

> If besides the Necessary Being there existed another Necessary Being, then it would necessarily be distinct from it. […] This implies that each of them has a rank of perfection in existence that does not belong to the other, which is neither an effect nor an emanation of the other, therefore implying that each of them lacks an existential perfection and is deprived of a second-order actualisation. Hence, the essence of each cannot be sheer actuality and necessity, but instead a thing whose essence is a referent of one thing's presence and another thing's absence, both belonging to the nature of existence *qua* existence. Its essence is not a pure existence nor a real one, therefore, and being a composite negates being essentially necessary. What is necessary of existence due to itself must therefore be of utmost actuality and perfect actualisation and something that combines all existential planes. There can be no equal to it in existence, nor can it have an opposite or likeness. Instead, its

105 For example, if A has the perfection *x* but lacks the perfection *y*, and B has the perfection *y* but lacks the perfection *x*, then each would be perfect in one sense and deficient in another. In A's case, therefore, 'A *qua* itself is *x*, but not *y*' would be true, and this clearly is impossible given that there is a combination of being and non-being.

> essence is not only the most perfect essence there is but also the ground of all other perfections, and this is the meaning of it being perfect and beyond perfection.[106]

The conclusion is that there can never be more than one instance of sheer existence.

There is something intriguing in these arguments. The same could be said of anything that is merely itself. For example, the concept of *sheer* humanity—that is, human *qua* human—cannot have more than one instance either. In fact, anything that is mutliplied or replicated across multiple instances cannot be just itself *extensionally* speaking. There can be multiple instances of humanity, for example, but only if humanity is conjoined with things besides humanity itself (e.g. particular spatial positions). The difference then is that whereas other concepts can be conceivably multiplied through multiple instances, the concept of a Necessary Being cannot. All instances of multiplication imply a combination of being and non-being. 'Human' is conceivably multiple because humanity can be conjoined to things apart from humanity, hence resulting in a combination of being (i.e. 'human') and non-being (i.e. 'not-human') in each instance. Zayd is a combination of his being a human, on the one hand, and his being not a human (e.g. a particular height, a particular weight), on the other. But this is impossible for the necessity of existence, because that which is necessary in all respects cannot be contingent in any respect whatsoever, and hence cannot be conjoined with anything that is not itself—namely, necessary of existence. Rather than attempting to explain how multiple Necessary Beings would be individuated, therefore, the inquiry is more fundamentally concerned with whether it is even logically conceivable for *wujūd*—existence in its purest form—to be subject to multiplication or replication.

This shift in perspective provides an independent proof for divine unity, one that has been formally recognised within the post-Ṣadrian philosophical tradition as *burhān al-ṣarāfa*, or 'the proof from sheer simplicity'.[107] The core principle of this argument states that something which is purely and exclusively itself cannot be duplicated or repeated (*ṣirf al-shay' lā yatathannā wa-lā yatakarrar*).[108] To illustrate this, consider the quiddity 'human'. When we reflect on *ṣirf al-insān*—humanity in its most unadulterated sense—we are contemplating the very notion of human *qua* itself, stripped of all accidental attributes.[109]

106 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rububiyya*, 1:51; cf. idem, *al-Ḥikmat al-muta'āliyya*, 1:156–57; idem., *Sharḥ al-Hidāya*, 2:155–6; idem., *Asrār al-āyāt*, 63; idem., *al-Mashā'ir*, 385–86; idem., *al-Masā'il al-qudsiyya*, 246–48.

107 The term *simplicity* in this context is open to equivocation. Here, it refers not to the standard metaphysical notion of a thing lacking compositionality but to something being unmixed with anything other than itself. For example, human in its pure and simple form is just human, even though it can be analysed in terms of animality and rationality. To consider *human* in its simplicity, then, is to regard it solely as rational animal—nothing more, nothing less.

108 The Arabic word *ṣirf* is difficult to translate into English, but its semantic meaning conveys the sense of something being unmixed, pure, and unattached to anything apart from itself.

109 It may be argued that a thing considered in this way is to be understood analytically as it being considered with the condition of nothing else alongside it (*bi-sharṭ lā*). In the context of our discussion, *ṣirf*

In this purely undifferentiated state there is no logical possibility of duplication, for there is nothing extrinsic to mark one instance as distinct from another. Hence, two instances of *ṣirf al-insān* would be identical. To speak of multiple instances of *ṣirf al-insān* would therefore be incoherent, for in every attempt to identify a second occurrence we would be left with the same undifferentiated notion without any criterion to individuate them. This stands in stark contrast to the case of two particular human beings such as Zayd and ʿAmr. While both are instances of 'human,' they are not instantiations of *ṣirf al-insān*.[110] Rather, they are accompanied by individuating characteristics—physical, temporal, and spatial distinctions—that allow for their differentiation. It is these additional attributes that permit multiplicity among particular instances of a general concept. However, sheer existence (*al-wujūd al-ṣirf*) does not admit of any such individuating attributes, for it is not conditioned by any limiting factor. It is existence in its most fundamental and unqualified form, devoid of all admixture with non-being. Since individuation requires some principle of distinction, and since *al-wujūd al-ṣirf* is an absolute reality untainted by negation or limitation, the very notion of a second instance becomes unintelligible. The principle *ṣirf al-shayʾ lā yatathannā wa-lā yatakarrar* thus serves as a philosophical corollary to the principle of indiscernibility, and affirms that there can be no multiplicity of concepts *qua* themselves.

This line of thinking provides a powerful demonstration of the Necessary Being's uniqueness which does not merely reject the possibility of multiple deities on metaphysical grounds but establishes through pure logical reasoning that the very structure of existence itself precludes any form of multiplicity within necessary existence. In doing so, it upholds the doctrine of *tawḥīd* as an inescapable conclusion derived from the nature of being itself.[111] This is one reason why 'God witnesses that there is no god but He' (Q. 3:18), because if God, the Necessary Being, is pure existence, then pure existence itself is what precludes there being another like it.[112] This is because had it been possible for the necessity of existence to be duplicated or repeated it would no longer be just sheer existence, for in order for there to be multiple instances there would also have had to be something else besides just sheer existence that makes each Necessary Being a discernible reality distinct from others. The very idea of there being something that is just 'sheer existence' is therefore defeated from the outset. The argument therefore demonstrates that if there is a Necessary Being that is just sheer existence then there can only be one instance of it.[113]

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al-wujūd is the same analytically speaking as *al-wujūd bi-sharṭ lā*, 'existence with the condition that it is not accompanied by anything apart from existence'. This is explicitly noted by Ṣadrā's commentators; see for example Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Manẓūma*, 1:445.

110 Based on what I have said in the previous footnote, Zayd instantiates 'human without any conditions' (*al-insān lā bi-sharṭ*) but not 'human with the condition of nothing else' (*al-insān bi-sharṭ lā*).

111 For Ṣadrā's presentation of this argument, see his *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, 1: 87, 90; idem., *Asrār al-āyāt*, 57–8. See also Mullā Ismāʿīl al-Iṣfāhānī, *Sharḥ al-Ḥikmat al-ʿarshiyya*, 433.

112 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 6:23, 129; idem., *Sharḥ al-Hidāya*, 2:154.

113 For Ṣadrā's presentation of this argument, see his *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, 1: 87, 90. See also Mullā Ismāʿīl

By his own admission Ṣadra's use of this argument is directly sourced from the insights of the twelfth-century Illuminationist philosopher Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī. In his *Talwīḥāt*, Suhrawardī remarks that:

> Being in the purest sense (*ṣirf al-wujūd*), besides which there is nothing more perfect, whenever [and wherever] a second [instance of it] is supposed [to exist] is upon reflection merely just itself. For there can be no distinctions within a thing in its purest sense. Whatever, then, is mixed with being cannot be the aforementioned Necessary Being. Since whatever the mind separates into a quiddity and existence is not incapable of having an accidental predicate nor is it something [whose meaning] cannot be shared [among many things]. How can this be otherwise when it must, by necessity, be something that belongs to one of the categories. Take note! For these are indeed inspirations from the Divine Throne! And take heed, therefore, that whatever exists necessarily cannot, as a matter of principle, be multiplied through multiple instances, so there can never be two Necessary Beings in existence.[114]

In his marginal comments on Ṣadrā's *Asfār*, Sabzawārī presents the argument from *ṣarāfa* in its proper logical form. The argument begins with the assertion that pure being represents existence in its most fundamental and unqualified state devoid of any determinations or limitations. All conditions—positive or negative—have been removed. This premise establishes the conceptual foundation for what follows. The crucial move in Sabzawārī's reasoning emerges in his second premise, where he demonstrates that the very nature of what exists in its purest sense precludes the possibility of distinction or differentiation. This follows from the recognition that distinction requires some basis of difference, yet pure being—by definition—admits of no such qualifying features that could serve as grounds for differentiation. The logic here is that if something exists in absolute purity (*ṣirf al-shayʾ*), there can be no features or characteristics that would allow us to distinguish one instance from another, as any such distinguishing marks would constitute a departure from pure unqualified being. From these premises, he draws the desired conclusion that pure being must be unique and irreplicable. This conclusion leads to other important observations, one being that multiplicity or duplication at the level of pure being is not merely contingently absent but logically impossible. This conclusion carries significant implications for understanding the relationship between unity and multiplicity in existence. Any apparent multiplicity must be understood as occurring at a derivative level, where pure being has already undergone some form of determination or qualification. Manyness is thus a hallmark of qualifed existence, not

al-Iṣfāhānī, *Sharḥ al-Ḥikmat al-ʿarshiyya*, 433.

114 Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, *al-Talwīḥāt*, 206; cf. Ibn Kammūna, *al-Kāshif* (*al-Jadīd fī l-ḥikma*); Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliyya*, 1:155–56.

existence *per se*. As Ṣadrā explains in his *Asrār al-āyāt*, the very notion of there being a duality or twoness in the concept of sheer existence is impossible, nevermind the question of whether there are two instances of it or not in reality. In other words, there is a logical impossibility, never mind an ontological one, in the very notion of there being two pure existences that are necessarily existent.[115]

5. *Tawḥīd* and Numerical Oneness

This brings us to the final section of this study: the concept of 'oneness' itself. As we have seen, the term 'one' can be understood in at least two different senses. The oneness of pure being—singular and irreplicable—stands in stark contrast to the oneness of ordinary entities such as human beings which can exist in multiple instances.[116] Given this complexity, Shīʿī *mutakallimūn*, philosophers, and mystics have been meticulous in ensuring that God's uniqueness is correctly articulated, a concern that arises from the necessity of distinguishing between the different senses in which 'oneness' can be predicated. Notably, the recorded statements of the Shīʿī Imams suggest that they too were acutely aware of this distinction. Imam ʿAlī, regarded as the preeminent source of wisdom (*ḥikma*) in Shīʿī Islam, articulated four distinct perspectives on divine oneness, asserting that only two accurately capture its true nature.[117]

The concept of 'oneness' (*waḥda*) signifies that a thing is indivisible from the perspective in which it is said to be 'one.' Broadly, this can be categorised into two types: (1) essential oneness (*al-wāḥid al-ḥaqīqī*) and (2) non-essential oneness (*al-wāḥid ghayr al-ḥaqīqī*). Essential oneness is further divided into (1a) true essential oneness (*al-waḥda al-ḥaqqa al-ḥaqīqiyya*) and (1b) nominal essential oneness, the latter often referred to as 'numerical oneness' (*al-waḥda al-ʿadadiyya*). Given these distinctions, we must ask: when the Qurʾan declares, 'Your God is one God; there is no god besides Him' (Q. 2:163), in what specific sense is divine oneness being affirmed? Addressing this question requires first clarifying the meaning of these various types of oneness—particularly, the distinction between true essential oneness and numerical oneness.

Numerical oneness is a familiar concept—one that we typically have in mind when we speak of something being 'one.' However, an entity is described as numerically one when the thing itself and the oneness attributed to it are not identical. For example, in the statement, 'There is one pen on the table,' the subject is qualified by numerical oneness, but the concept of pen *qua* pen is distinct from the concept of one *qua* one.

115 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asrār al-āyāt*, 57 where Ṣadrā explains that the existence of two pure existences is *muḥāl al-farḍ*, i.e. impossible to conceive.

116 As Avicenna and other philosophers point out, 'one', like 'being', is predicated with ambiguity (*maqūl bi-l-tashkīk*).

117 al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Sayyid Hāshim al-Ḥussaynī al-Ṭihrānī (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1430/[2008–2009]), 81 *hadith* no. 3.

In this case, oneness functions as a extrinsic rather than an intrinsic part of the pen's essence. This distinction explains why the number of pens can be one or many. If 'being one' were identical to 'being a pen' or a part thereof, then the number of pens could never exceed one.

Numerical oneness is thus defined by the possibility of repeated instantiation. If I am holding one pen, and then pick up another, I now have 'two pens.' The addition of a second pen is neither logically incoherent nor metaphysically problematic, nor would be the addition of a third or a fourth. This is because numerical oneness presupposes a certain finitude, a limitation in existence. A single pen is one, but not infinite; therefore, it allows for the possibility of other pens existing alongside it. In contrast, if a pen were infinite—an 'infinite pen', so to speak—there would be no logical space for a second pen. What this shows is that in order for something to be countable, it must possess a finite existence. There is thus a fundamental link between countability and ontological limitation. If countability and finitude characterise numerical oneness, then 'true essential oneness' refers to that which is 'one' in a way that excludes the very possibility of multiplicity. Such an entity is not only unique but necessarily so, because its infinitude precludes the existence of anything else like it.[118] In the context of our discussion this means that just as God is necessarily existent He is also necessarily one, and, more importantly, that 'there is nothing like Him' (*laysa ka-mithlihi shay'*).

When the Qur'an states, 'Your God is one God,' therefore, this statement can be interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation is that 'one' refers to numerical oneness, meaning that while it is a fact that there is only one God, there is no logical impossibility in the idea of there being more than one. By contrast, the second interpretation understands the predicate 'one' as referring to true essential oneness, and on that basis affirms the subject's infinity whilst also eliminating the possibility of there being further instances of the same. Therefore, while both readings affirm the unity of God, they have starkly different implications for the possibility of plurality. The first affirms unity but does not deny the logical possibility of plurality, whereas the second affirms unity but also denies the logical possibility of its instances being multiplied.

The modern Shīʿī philosopher al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī draws upon the philosophical notion of true essential oneness in his commentary on those Qur'anic verses that explicitly affirm God's unity. In particular, he observes that whenever the Qur'an describes God as

118 As al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains, true essential oneness is 'a kind of unity with which the presumption of any kind of multiplicity is impossible' (*al-waḥda allatī yastaḥīlu maʿahā farḍ al-takaththur*); see al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Bidāyat al-ḥikma*, 157; cf. idem, *Nihāyat al-ḥikma*, 1:241, 2:225. Given that things predicated with true essential oneness cannot be multiplied, they are often referred to as 'one in the non-numerical sense' (*al-wāḥid bi-lā ʿadad*), unlike things that are one but capable of being multiplied, in which case their unity or oneness is referred to as numerical oneness (*al-wāḥid bi-l-ʿadad*). In the Shīʿī tradition, the Imams described God as one in the non-numerical sense. For more on this aspect of Shīʿī scholarship, see Zoheir Esmail's contribution in this volume.

being 'one', it frequently qualifies this oneness with the attribute *al-qahhār*.[119] This term has been rendered in various ways in modern English translations, but regardless of the specific word chosen, the Qur'an undeniably associates God's oneness with *qāhiriyya*, prompting the question: why? For Ṭabāṭabā'ī, this linguistic detail provides an important hermeneutical opportunity to explore the philosophical implications of divine unity. From a grammatical perspective, *al-qahhār* is the intensified active participle of the root *q-h-r* (to overpower, subjugate). By ascribing this quality to God's oneness, the Qur'an implicitly rejects any notion of divine unity being characterised by the passive participle *maqhūr* (overpowered or subdued). Ṭabāṭabā'ī argues that this distinction is significant: the Qur'an not only affirms God's unity but also emphasises His absolute dominance, thereby rejecting in his view a purely numerical understanding of oneness.

For Ṭabāṭabā'ī, then, whenever the Qur'an declares God's oneness, it does more than simply assert that there is only one God—it also *negates* the very possibility of any other divine or quasi-divine entities. This is not a weak metaphysical claim, but a strong one. Such an assertion is particularly important within the historical context of the Qur'an's revelation. According to Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the *mushrikūn* of seventh-century Arabia did not practice outright polytheism but rather adhered to a form of henotheism. While the Qur'an condemns their beliefs as *shirk*, their theology suggests that they acknowledged Allah as the supreme deity while also venerating lesser deities for intercession or worldly benefits.[120] Thus, the primary mission of the Qur'an was not merely to affirm belief in Allah but to categorically reject the existence of any other divine or quasi-divine beings. One way the Qur'an accomplishes this, according to Ṭabāṭabā'ī, is by describing God as *al-Wāḥid al-Qahhār*—a formulation that decisively refutes the notion of numerical oneness and underscores His absolute and unparalleled supremacy.

> The Qur'an in its highest teachings denies numerical oneness (*al-waḥdat al-ʿadadiyya*) of God. This kind of oneness exists only by virtue of this 'one thing' being distinguished from this other 'one thing' due to the finitude [of their being] that rules over them and the measurability [of their quantities] that overpowers them. An example of this is the water in a river. When this water is divided into different containers, then the water contained inside each of them is 'one water', but it is not the same as the other waters in the other containers, which are also 'one water' in

119 See Qur'an 12:39, 14:48, 38:65, 39:4, 40:16.

120 See al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Qom: Mu'ssasah-i Maṭbūʿātī-yi Ismāʿīliyyān, 1973), 16:148, commentary on Q. 29:61 (also 31:25, 39:38). Elsewhere in the Qur'an the *mushrikūn* are reported as saying, 'We only worship them so they may bring us closer to Allah in position' (Q. 39:3), an attitude which suggests a belief in a hierarchy where Allah was supreme, but the intercessors were necessary for gaining divine favour. The *mushrikūn*'s error, Ṭabāṭabā'ī argues, was not that they denied the existence of Allah, but rather that they failed to worship Him alone by admitting the existence of other lesser deities. Cf. Patricia Crone, 'The Religion of the Qur'ānic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities', *Arabica* 57 (2010): 151–200.

> their own right. The only reason each of them is 'one water' and distinguishable from the others is because what is contained in the other containers is negated from it; they do not all exist together in one container, but are separated [...] If God is affirmed to be the overpowerer and not the one overpowered, the one who subjugates and not who is subjugated by anything whatsoever, then there is no way of conceiving a numerical oneness or numerical plurality for Him.[121]

At the core of these claims is the metaphysical assertion that a thing's distinction and separability—qualities that coexist with its unity and oneness—stem from the finitude of its existence. The implication is that God's existence, being infinite, cannot logically permit the simultaneous existence of other beings, whether divine or contingent, alongside Him. For Ṭabāṭabāʾī, a holistic reading of Qurʾanic verses pertaining to God, His existence, and His attributes affirms the philosophical and mystical view that all perfections belong exclusively to God. He is the Perfect Being and by virtue of His perfection He bestows all other beings with whatever perfections they possess. Nothing possesses any perfection except insofar as it is already present in God.[122]

Like Ṣadrā, Ṭabāṭabāʾī therefore also identifies the Necessary Being as a maximally perfect being. God possesses all perfections to greatest extent possible and He is the source of these perfections in other beings. This is supported by numerous verses of the Qurʾan on the one hand and a robust metaphysics on the other. If the Necessary Being lacks a certain perfection then His being is characterised by privation. This means two things: (1) that it is a combination of being and non-being and (2) that it is finite, both of which entail its being contingent. Its finitude results from the fact that it is limited by privation: when something lacks a perfection, it is limited with respect to that thing. But a Necessary Being is sheer existence and therefore does not have any privations, and hence it cannot be limited—metaphysically speaking—in any sense whatsoever. In the context of divine unity, this means that because God's existence is sheer existence, and because whatever is sheer existence has to be infinite, the unity that is predicated of Him can only be true essential oneness (*al-waḥdat al-ḥaqīqiyya al-ḥaqqa*). This unity overpowers and subjugates the possibility of reproduction, replication or duplication, and thus negates the possibility of any other Necessary Being. In essence, there is a complete ontological overlap between the concepts of unity and (necessary) being: pure being is truly one, and whatever is truly one can only be sheer existence. This is the Necessary Being.

In light of the foregoing analysis, it is evident that Ibn Kammūna's counterargument against divine unity does not stand when examined through the lens of the Ṣadrian tradition. While Ibn Kammūna challenges Avicenna's proof by arguing that multiple Necessary Beings could exist with distinct yet unknowable essences, this critique is

121 al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʿān*, 6:88.
122 Ibid., 89.

tantamount to an equivocal understanding of existence that Ṣadrā explicitly rejects. Central to Ṣadrā's metaphysics is the doctrine of the modulation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), which posits that existence is a single graded reality rather than a collection of disparate, unrelated essences (and/or existences). This perspective allows Ṣadrā and those who followed his philosophical scheme to dissolve Ibn Kammūna's objection by demonstrating that any putative second Necessary Being would be either (1) a manifestation of the same reality of necessary existence, in which case it would not be truly distinct, or (2) a being whose necessity of existence is qualified by limitation, thereby rendering it contingent rather than necessary. Furthermore, Ṣadrā's commitment to the principle that pure being (*wujūd ṣirf*) is necessarily one and indivisible reinforces the impossibility of multiple Necessary Beings. If God is maximally perfect and infinite in His existence, as the Ṣadrian framework asserts, then any other putative Necessary Being would either partake in this perfection—rendering it identical to God—or fall short of it, making it contingent. The notion of a second Necessary Being thus collapses into incoherence, as it would either be redundant or lack the very attributes that define necessary existence.

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